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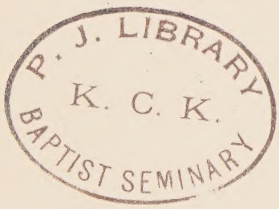

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SIXTY YEARS WITH THE BIBLE

I

THE MOTIVE

Not for the sake of telling the story, but for the sake of what the story may tell, do I sit down to write these notes of memory. With respect to the Bible, I am one of the men who have lived through the crisis of the Nineteenth Century, and experienced the change which that century has wrought. I began, as a child must begin, with viewing the Bible in the manner of my father's day, but am ending with a view that was never possible until the large work of the Nineteenth Century upon the Bible had been done. Thus I am entering into the heritage of my generation, which I consider it both my privilege and my duty to accept. To

some of my friends it may seem that I have changed too much, and to others that I have changed too little. It may indeed be that I have made mistakes, sometimes in one direction and sometimes in the other. That is the human way. But I know that I have followed my light, and passed through the revolution to which my generation was born, and have never come into danger of losing my faith in God and Jesus Christ. If a man may say it of himself, I have passed without ruin over what many deem to be a very dangerous way—nay, over a road that truly has its perils, not to be forgotten or despised.

Many, I know, have gone over that road of change at my side, or a little before or after, and many, willing or unwilling, are making the journey now. Many, too, are wondering whether they shall be compelled to go, and are looking with alarm on the perils that beset the way.

Very many are pitying those who have been compelled to set forth. Is it possible, these inquirers ask, for a man to make this change with regard to the Bible without losing his faith, not to say his soul? Can there be good reasons for it? Is it credible that the steps are legitimate? Is it to be supposed for a moment that a man can be led by sound reason and good religious experience from the old attitude toward the Bible to the new? Can there possibly be any leading of the Spirit of truth in this experience? Is it not a mere wandering on the dark mountains without a guide? For the rank and file of the Christian people these are living questions, since facts that lead directly toward the great change are pressing into common knowledge and cannot be ignored. Many are asking these questions with godly sincerity though, perhaps, with trembling; while there are too many who have only

indignation for the change, and denunciation for those who believe it to be of God.

An argumentative answer to these questions might be useful, and there are men to make it; but upon such a practical issue the best witness is experience. What if a man who has made the change without losing his faith were to recount the stages of his journey? What if he were to show by what steps he had come, and offer his comrades opportunity to judge whether his processes had been legitimate, valid, spiritual, worthy of a child of God? I can well believe that such a revelation of experience might be an enlightening and encouraging thing to many a perplexed and anxious soul. More than once it has occurred to me that if I were to tell the story of my own life in the single character of a student, lover, and user of the Bible, exhibiting the mental processes through which the

change in my own attitude toward the Bible has come to pass, I might be offering to many a veritable helping hand. For I know that in my case the change has been an honest one, and am equally sure that it has been a legitimate one, which I could not have refused to make without being false to the true light. It sprang out of the very necessities of my life and thought, and resulted directly from my worthiest work. It has followed sound processes, and stands as a genuine element in Christian experience. It was necessary, it was Christian, it was beneficent. Knowing well these facts about it, I am inclined to place my experience with the Bible at the disposal of any whom it may help.

No man can tell the whole of such a story, and yet I think I can trace my course clearly enough through the years, and trust that I can truthfully represent the way in which the Lord my God has

led me. The chief influences from without, the main crises in thought, and the entrance of significant results, I certainly can recount, and I can exhibit my present position in contrast with the old. I shall have to trace my journey from childhood to the present day. I cannot expect that my memories of personal experience will be as interesting to others as they are to me, and yet I have confidence that my story will be interesting, for it will possess at least the interest that belongs to a human document. If my progress appears to have been more or less irregular, halting, inconsistent, this element will be no mystery to any who understand themselves, for it belongs to human nature. Yet I can see, and hope to show, that by a sure and unceasing guidance I have been brought along the way to the present goal.

But I do not write for the sake of the interest that an autobiography might

possess, and I shall record nothing that does not bear directly upon my relation to the Bible and the progress of my mind with regard to it. If I could tell the story in any person but the first I should do so, but I cannot. In no sense do I offer the story as an *Apologia pro Vitâ Meâ*—for which no one would care; but I do wish it to stand as an *Apologia* for the kind of experience which it records. That experience with respect to the Bible, radical though it may seem to some readers, and conservative to others, I desire to illustrate as worthy of a child of God, and to commend to all my brothers in God's family. I shall accomplish all that I have in mind to do if I convince my readers that for reasons that are sound and by processes that are worthy one man has passed over from the old view of the Bible to the new. Yet of course I am desiring more than this. If I succeed in bringing in this conviction, I shall hope for fruits following.

I shall hope that my experience may lead many a man to commit himself without fear to the journey that I have been led to make, assured that the good hand of his God will be upon him as he moves out into the broader country.

II

THE FIFTIES

When I speak of sixty years with the Bible, I am thinking of the period that extends from about the middle of the Nineteenth Century to the present time. I take this whole period for my field, for the reason that my memory covers it all. In this ninth year of the Twentieth Century I am sixty-seven years old, and my remembrance of the Bible as an element in my life runs back into the late Forties. As I give form to my memories, the decades may well serve me for divisions. Indeed I could not ask for better divisions, for each one of them has in my memory a character of its own, and represents a distinct stage in the movement

of my mind with reference to the Bible. With the first decade that I name, the earliest memories may be gathered in.

I cannot remember when I could not read, or when the Bible was not in my hands for reading. My earliest remembrance of it brings up the picture of family worship. How clear it is, and how calm and beautiful! There were five of us—father, mother, and three children, of whom I was the second. In the morning, not before breakfast, but after it, we all sat down with Bibles in our hands, and read in turn three verses apiece. My verse was the tenth, and when we read around twice the twenty-fifth. In this manner day by day the Bible was read through. Genealogies were omitted, and sometimes we passed over other hard places. I think the New Testament may have been repeated, while the Old Testament was read but once. But on prin-

ciple the reading was continuous and impartial, doing justice to the book as a whole. There was very little explanation, usually none. The reading was followed by solemn prayer, all kneeling. Whether I understood it or not, the body of the Scriptures was thus presented to my childish mind, and with or without understanding it made its impression. The mental atmosphere of which I was conscious was one of solemnity and reverence. Of course I sometimes looked off and was indifferent: even now I can hear my father's voice calling me back to my reading: but that was the exception, not the rule. It was assumed, and to me was real, that in dealing with the Bible I had to do with God.

Was it burdensome and hateful? Did we dread the morning worship? No. Probably I should be going too far if I said that we children actually loved the service, but I know that for my part I

never rebelled against or wished it out of the way. It was a matter of course, and a good matter of course, a proper part of the day's life. No hatred of the Bible ever came from it. For in fact the use of the Bible was not a matter of the morning worship only: it was a part of the family existence.

My father, a minister of the gospel, was constantly in communion with the book, though he talked little of his work. He was not a highly educated man, but he was a man of sweet reasonableness, and his theories of doctrine were tempered in application with a fine practical wisdom. I suppose he must have had some theory of inspiration, but he never made the value of the Bible depend upon it. He had no need of the theory, for he was building upon the reality. Here was God's own message, and for him, and for my mother, the Bible was the last word. She, reared in the godliness of an earlier

day, carried the Bible in mind and heart. She was not always quoting it, but for guidance of her life, and of ours, it was always with her. It is true that she was in unconscious bondage because the Bible brought her the spirit of Judaism as well as the Christian faith, and not until old age did she come out into the liberty of the children of God; but with a willing loyalty she held the Bible as her law. Reverence for it we learned from both our parents. It was never a theme for jests, and I grew up with almost a horror of joking on biblical subjects. About the Bible there was a holy air, which to us children was attractive, not repellent. Bible stories we early learned—and they were true. We did not question whether they were easily believable or not, or whether they were worthy of God. The bears that rent the children for mocking at the prophet, and the thousands struck dead for looking into the ark of God, were

as real to us as Joseph and his brothers, or Ruth, or the child Jesus in the temple. Morally, all was on one level to us. The ethical questions did not arise. All that the Bible said of God or men was true, all that God or good men did was right, and the stories were sacred.

Upon my idea of the Bible the Sunday-school was much less influential than the home. My teachers had but the hour with me while my parents had the week, and the teachers knew much less about the Bible. Besides, the Sunday-school was then attempting but very little. The most of our work there consisted in reciting, or failing to recite, our seven verses a week, which we were supposed to commit to memory. Our lessons were mainly in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Only occasionally did we touch the Old Testament: not at all I think, except here and there in the Psalms. There was some attempt at explanation,

and sometimes I felt that the teacher was really adding something to my knowledge of the lesson, but usually the contribution was small. Late in my period we used Question-books: I wish I could see one of them now. It came to pass, however, by means of Sunday-school and home influence combined, that large portions of Scripture became lodged in my memory. Now and then there were competitions in memorizing, and I once took a very small prize in one of them; but that was a foolish practice, for we aimed at quantity, and promptly lost our gains. The regular quiet practice in home and school was more effective. Perhaps there was a foreglimpse of historical method in the fact that the first passage that I ever memorized began with "Now when Jesus was born, in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king." I have always been profoundly grateful that my youthful mem-

ory stored up so much of the Bible, and only wish it had done more. I never became weary of the Sunday-school, as boys often did, but I think that in the later years that was due to the influence of a teacher. The school did not retain my affection by what it had done for me, for its contribution was decidedly a minor one.

No one could believe the Bible more thoroughly than I did. In school with me when I was perhaps fifteen years old there was a young man a few years older who had the name of being an infidel—so easily did neighbors classify and condemn upon slight acquaintance. Whether he deserved the name I do not know: he was a serious-minded fellow, much in earnest, and with at least a glimmer of some large ideas. He loved to talk, and one night he told me that there were contradictions in the Bible that could not be reconciled. This I could not admit, for

it would mean that God had contradicted himself, a thing incredible. I assured him that he was wrong, and told him to bring me his contradictions, and I would tell him how they were to be explained. This offer was less conceited than it seems, for my father had a book in which a man of high repute had dealt with alleged contradictions in the Bible. I supposed that of course so great a man must have found them all and adjusted them, and had no doubt that I should find the young man's difficulties satisfactorily attended to. After a few days he brought me three or four questions. I have forgotten what they were, though I remember how the paper looked upon which he had written them. I betook myself at once to my book, but was surprised to find that these particular contradictions were not mentioned there—not one of them. Could it be that this young man had hit upon difficulties which the great

man had not noticed, or did not know how to solve? I came away with a first lesson in the disappointingness of books, and also with a vague feeling that there were points of uncertainty about the Bible, though I had supposed there were none. My confidence was not shaken, for I had no doubt that the questions could be answered and the honor of the Bible be completely vindicated; but I could not solve the contradictions at the time, and knew that I could not. Nothing more was ever said on the subject, for I had nothing to say, and the other was generous enough not to call the matter up—a magnanimous infidel. I remember the episode as an interesting one, and it was important, too, for it gave me my first experimental glimpse of a point of view about the Bible different from my own. I had heard of sceptical questions, and supposed that these belonged to that class, but had not known

whether any of them had any shadow of reason on their side.

When I was sixteen years old my personal religious life began. The blossoming of the long-prepared bud came suddenly, and I was full of fresh delight in the holy interests that were opened to me. Food for my soul I knew was to be found in the Bible, and I remember on the very first day asking my father what in the Bible I should read. Wisely or not, he referred me to the eighth chapter of Romans. I remember where I sat to read it, and what Bible I read it in. I remember the eager expectation with which I began. I remember, too, the effect. My soul was fed with heavenly food. There were solid and splendid expressions of truth there, so clear and glorious that I could not miss them, and so harmonious with my new life that they could not fail of entrance. Some of the

divinest words in the world found me that day, and entered into the stock of my life. Nevertheless I rose from the reading with a faint shadow of disappointment. Those magnificent lights of God seemed to shine out through clouds. There were matters in the chapter that I did not grasp, and there were forms of thought and modes of presentation that did not appeal to me. The Jewish law in which the apostle had been reared was real to him when he wrote, but it was not real to me, and his references to it, which entered into the very substance of his discourse, did not seem to belong to me, or to bring me any message. The glories of the Christian life stood before me in this splendid passage, but why should there be so much more besides?

I did not exactly state this to myself, but the two feelings were mingled in my mind. I had never been taught any rigid theory of the equality of all Scrip-

ture, but the assumption that the whole Bible was equally from God had carried with it the assumption that any part of it would be found profitable for the soul. I knew indeed, in a general way, that Leviticus, for example, was not so profitable as Luke; but when I was sent to a great Christian passage like the eighth chapter of Romans I did not suppose that there would be any drawback upon its availability, but expected to find food in every thought. Was it all my ignorance that I did not find so much? At any rate I learned, practically though still inarticulately, at the very first endeavor of the new hunger, that not everything in the Bible is equally available as food for the soul.

I have never since judged that the difference was due to my youthful ignorance alone. Of course a part of it was, and I have since seen glories in that passage that I could not discern that day. But I

have learned that some of Paul's connections for the gospel may have seemed to him and his first readers to be a part of the gospel itself and to have like force with it, while they could never hold that rank with me, trained in so different a world. No wonder that the ancient law was not alive to me, for I had never lived with it but only heard of it. I think that my young Christian appetite was healthy, and seized upon the rich and abundant food that lay before me, and passed by what it could not assimilate, as it had a right to do. And I can well understand how a writing of the first century may have contained much that a modern Christian appetite can never assimilate as genuine Christian food.

Whether I am right or wrong in this, it is certain that from that day began the selection of my personal Bible. From day to day and from year to year I went on finding what in the Bible was precious

to me, and making it my own. Sometimes this Bible of mine within the Bible has been growing larger and my proprietorship in it has been becoming more positive and intense. Sometimes it has grown smaller, through the dropping out of something that was discovered to be less Christlike than I had taken it to be. This is no process peculiar to me. All Christians gather out their personal Bibles to feed upon, all smaller than the great book, and for them more available. I am only noting that my work of selection was going on, though I did not yet understand what I was doing, from the very first day of my Christian life. My childhood with the Bible was ended, and I was entering upon the work of a man. Let it not be supposed, however, that the main work of those early days was rejection, or anything that resembled it. No: it was recognition, selection, assimilation. I was taking food, not refusing it. I well

remember the keen delight with which in those days I was taking to myself what I found precious in the holy word.

Scarcely had this personal dealing with the Bible begun when another significant experience appeared. Almost immediately I encountered my first real questioning about the relation of the Bible to science. Thus early in life was this great question brought home to me. At the time I was studying Geology in a secondary school. Our text-book was the work of two Christian men collaborating, who wrote in a reverent spirit. They made the geological story absolutely plain and convincing, but were anxious not to disturb a student's confidence in the Bible. At the end we found a chapter in which they compared the testimony of Geology with that of Genesis with regard to the creation of the world. There I became acquainted with the chief endeavors to

reconcile the two records, and was encouraged to believe that sound reconciliation was quite possible. But of course I had learned earlier in the book that the doctrine of an earth only six thousand years old, which I had always understood the Bible to teach, was forever irreconcilable with Geology and impossible of belief. Facts enough to convince me of that had already been presented, and I was convinced. Science had demonstrated that the earth was ancient, and it was useless to object. The Bible appeared to teach otherwise, but we must have misunderstood the Bible. Some other interpretation of it must be possible, and must be sought. So the text-book argued, and I agreed thereto.

Here, it is true, arose the question whether a Christian may rightly allow science to interpret for him the word of God, or even to call for a new interpretation of it. With my new love and rev-

erence for the Bible, I could not fail to be interested in this inquiry. My father, with the reverent caution of the older generation, decidedly hesitated here, thinking that the revelation of God must be interpreted by religion and by that alone. The Bible stood by itself, and must be interpreted in its own light. But though I appreciated the motive of this reasoning, I found myself yielding to facts, and allowing science, not my reading of the Bible, to tell me what I should believe about the age of the earth. In this my opening mind was opening aright. But I never supposed for a moment that science was taking the place of the Bible as the decisive witness: I supposed that it was only interpreting the Bible.

As to the creation itself, my authors told me of Hugh Miller's harmonizing theory, then current—the brilliant poetic fancy of a series of visions supernaturally opened to the mind of Moses, showing

him the course of God's creative work, and successively described by him in the first chapter. But they did not urge this view upon me, since they could not say that the order of the visions corresponded to the order of the geological facts. In other words, they did not hold that the first chapter of Genesis agreed with the geological record. Their theory was that the sublime first verse, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," announced the unimaginably ancient fact of the primeval creation, that between that verse and the second there lay a great pause, or chasm, covering the entire geological period, and that then the chapter went on to describe an actual six days' work of God upon the earth at the end of that period, "fitting it up to be the abode of man"—whatever that might mean. This sounds impossible enough at present, and yet it is as good as any of the attempts to make Genesis and Geol-

ogy agree. This I accepted at the time as a satisfactory explanation, and went my way untroubled by conflict. The Bible had been taken out of the way of the facts.

At the time I could not know how much this meant. But the fact was that I had consented to submit one item of knowledge with which the Bible dealt to another authority instead of the Bible. At the dictation of scientific facts I had accepted a new meaning for the initial chapter; that is, I had allowed the Bible to be altered for me to suit the facts.

This I had done, and happily I did not know that I had done anything of serious importance. If I had known, I should have been troubled. But I simply adopted the new meaning into my sacred book, and understood the Bible in its proper meaning to stand as a witness to the view of the facts which I had obtained. No shadow of change had fallen

upon my confidence in the Bible, but here was a first step in a new manner of understanding it and using it. And at present any one can see that this was a part of the work of the coming age. When this was done, old things were passing away.

Owing to the religious character of my early training, my lot was happier than that of another youth who long afterward told me his experience. A few years later than this he entered college, and went on the first Sunday to the students' Bible class. The teacher began with the Bible at the beginning, and in that first hour my friend learned for the first time that there were people who believed that Genesis and Geology did not agree. By the discovery he was utterly broken up. 'Geology was a science of facts, and were facts against the Bible? So external and so loose was the grasp of his mind upon the Bible that under this shock he lost it

altogether, and years passed before he got it back. His Christian faith, too, suffered a like eclipse. Because I had been better trained than he, and was holding to the Bible in a more rational confidence, I was led through this first stage of revolution without a break with the past or a shock of fear for the future. My mind was simply opening to the facts that must be received. Indeed, I most thankfully acknowledge that this whole story which I am to record is a story of quiet development, with very little of sharp struggles and alarms.

III

THE SIXTIES

VERY early in the Sixties, near the end of my college course, I pledged myself in spirit to the work of the Christian ministry, and before very long I was a student in a Theological Seminary. There our main work was biblical. We had a course in History, and one in Systematic Theology, and a little work in the practical topics; but our chief text-book was the Bible, and the department of Interpretation was the most exacting of them all. Not that there was any formal appointment to this effect; but this was in harmony with the view of the ministry that makes the minister to be first and chiefly, if not solely, an interpreter of the Scrip-

tures, a view that was largely accepted in the churches which the Seminary served.

I had not been doing much with my Bible during my years in college, but turned to it now with new enthusiasm under a new influence. This, happily, was the personal inspiration of a teacher.

He was a good scholar, though I do not know that he was an exceptionally great one. But I do know that he was a man of strong convictions, of a most beautiful devoutness, of absolute sincerity, and of perfectly unconquerable industry. His permanent physical condition was such as would have made many men idle and most men easy, but his holy resolution held him to an amount of work that put his students to perpetual shame. He did not affect every one as he affected me, but to me he was simply irresistible. His Christian character held my love and admiration, his scholarship commanded my respect, and his industry was contagious.

What I could do I had to do, while I was with him.

What was his aim? His aim was to bring out the meaning of the Bible, and to train us in ability to do the same. For him the voice of the Bible was the voice of God, and therefore he bent his ear to listen. Since the book brought him the divine testimony concerning God and Christ, the great salvation and the common duties, he was its unweariable student, judging no labor too great if he could understand the message. I do not remember what he thought of inspiration, if I ever knew, but I saw for myself what he thought of the word of God. The sacredness of the study dominated everything. He was an enthusiastic believer in textual criticism, and required us to make use of Tischendorf's text, then the best in existence, and all for a religious reason. In reading the message of God we must have before us as nearly as pos-

sible the very words that were originally penned. This was not merely a privilege that was open to us in modern time, but an absolute duty in the sight of God. To use an antiquated and inferior text when a better was within our reach would be a sin. From the same devout point of view he gave his strength to exegesis, affectionately tracing out the inspired thought, and laboring to know the very thing that the divine Spirit had led the writers to express.

His influence and example made me a Bible student. Our outfit of helps was pitiably meagre, but with such as we had I set myself to the work. He taught us the right use of commentaries and the like, insisting that whatever helps we might use, our conclusions as to the meaning must be in an honest sense our own. We must not shirk the responsibility of judging what our Bible means. I learned that lesson early, to my lifelong

advantage. He made it impossible for me to shoulder off upon commentators my duty of understanding the Bible. One of his exhortations abides in memory: "Let no word of man come between your soul and the pure word of God." It was because in the Bible he found the pure word of God that he would purge the text of errors, and let commentaries be helpers only, and bring his own soul to reverent and joyful communion with the divine utterance in the sacred book. I remember also the joyful zest with which he once said to me that Christianity calls for no illegitimate intellectual processes, and has place for none.

It was under such influence that I now went to work. Of course my work was youthful and crude, but it was sincere. Under my teacher's influence I trained myself in paraphrasing—a very useful method for a student—expressing in my

own words with all attainable precision the author's continuous thought. In this there was call for the investigation of every word, and for the most careful judgment as to structure, connection, and purpose. At various times in the course of my life I have put large labor into such paraphrasing of parts of the Bible, and consider the labor extremely well invested. In the student period I was trying to master the art of understanding the Bible, and was making a beginning in the actual work of interpreting it, gathering into my storehouse as well as I could the contents of the divine revelation. I conceived of all divine revelation as contained in the Bible, and was doing what I could toward making the wealth of it my own. I was happy in my studies, the best that was in me going out in search of the truth of God.

Much Scripture, as I have said, was already in my memory, and now I was obtaining command of more. With the

contents of the Bible I was becoming more largely acquainted, to my lasting advantage. With the substance of the New Testament, both in English and in Greek, very few students are as familiar as I was when I left the Seminary. With the Old Testament I never did quite so well, though I was much at home with it, but the New Testament I had at my fingers' ends. A little later I could give chapter and verse on call, for all the great passages and a host of the minor ones, and could identify a verse when the first Greek words of it were read to me. Later still I knew out of what stratum of thought or group of conceptions in the New Testament any given expression came—a knowledge far more valuable than that of verse and chapter. As for my familiarity with the New Testament in my student days, it was unusual, but it was by no means excessive. I think every theologue should thoroughly master his New Testament by

way of familiarity, not neglecting the Old, while he is still a student.

In such an atmosphere it naturally came to pass that in general theological thought I was a firm biblicist. I remember how my feeling toward the Bible influenced my feeling about Systematic Theology. My teacher in that department was a man of different mould of mind from my teacher in the Bible. He ranged more widely, he was more mystical in his vein, and he was more of a philosopher, thinking for himself and outreaching far and wide. One was searching in the Bible to discover the truth of God; the other was using truth that he had found there or anywhere else, in the broad excursions of a reverently exploring spirit. To this speculative work of the theologian I felt deep objection, because it was not biblical enough: it was not built on proof-texts, or buttressed by them, as I thought it ought to

be: it was too speculative, I thought, and grounded elsewhere than in the word of God. In this judgment I was sincere, but I was wrong. The theologian was using Scripture as it had been assimilated by his mind and yielded him its teaching, a process that I could not then understand. The Bible inspired his theology: I thought it ought to dictate it. His method was legitimate and truly Christian, and to his large uplifting influence, which I understood better in later years, I am indebted no less than to the influence that led me at first to be suspicious of it. In my day his teaching power was comparatively undeveloped, but in later years he became a teacher of magnificent inspiration.

From neither of the two men did I get any clear theory of the inspiration of the Scriptures, though I studied the theories that were current. I cannot say that I ever really believed in the ancient theory

of dictation, or verbal inspiration, though of course I inherited the effects of ancestral belief in it; but in the course of my studies I became aware that it could not possibly be true. Later, in the early Seventies, I listened to a strenuous and elaborate defence of verbal inspiration by a minister of high repute, which gave the doctrine its death-blow for me. With such defences, it was doomed. But already it was outside of my world. It was impossible that that theory should be really alive in the presence of my studies, which rested upon textual criticism with its uncertainty as to the very words, and constantly called my attention to the large and living human element in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, my view of inspiration was no dead letter. I looked upon the Bible as so inspired by God that its writers were not capable of error. I did not feel myself at liberty to dissent from its teachings, to doubt the accuracy

of its statements, or to question the validity of its reasonings. This was not the result of a theory of the manner of inspiration: it was my working principle in use of the Bible, inherited from earlier times. Anywhere else, I should not have taken seriously the great age of the patriarchs; but since it was written in the Bible I thought that nothing but scepticism would doubt it. If I doubted that, I might doubt anything that was written there. So I believed that Methuselah lived his nine hundred and sixty-nine years. The hand of Paul, I saw, lay heavily upon the activities of Christian women, but I distrusted the arguments by which some were endeavoring to lift it off—or rather, I distrusted the entire business of tampering with such matters. Paul was an inspired man, and his prohibitions were not to be set aside. As a witness to truth, Paul, or any other inspired writer, was the same as God. Hence the presumption was

that his commands were universal and permanent in their scope, and to argue these prohibitions down to a local and temporary application in Corinth seemed to me to belittle the Bible and degrade it from its high estate. God's written requirements were presumably universal. And of this reasoning I do not think so badly, even now. If I still held the same premises, I am inclined to think that I should be compelled to hold the same conclusions.

As to the character of inspiration, however, I remember the rising of one rather startling question. No one heard it but myself, but I heard it and it went far into my mind. In the Sixties the famous book called "Essays and Reviews, by Clergymen of the Church of England," created a stir that now seems incredible. At present it would seem gentle as a summer's breeze, but then it was a veritable storm-centre in English theology. I did not read the book, but I picked it up one

day in the library, and read the statement, in effect, that any theory of inspiration, or divine influence in writing, that can be true of the Bible must be true of all parts of the Bible: it must account for the qualities of Judges as well as of John, of Esther as well as of Isaiah, of the Song of Solomon as well as of the Epistle to the Romans, of the Apocalypse as well as of the Gospel of Luke. That startled me, and I laid down the book with the feeling that I had read enough for once. "Of course that is true," I said to myself, for there was nothing else to say. The statement proved itself. A good theory of inspiration must be good all round, fitting all the inspired writings. But before I had closed the book the conviction had flashed upon me that I knew no theory of inspiration that could stand this reasonable test. The theories that I had studied might account for some books, but were transparently impossible for

others. They were framed to account for the highest quality of the Bible in its noblest parts, and assumed that that high quality ran through the whole—which it does not. I felt pretty certain also that it would be impossible to construct a theory of inspiration that would meet this reasonable demand, if inspiration was to bear anything more than a very general and indefinite meaning. I was not able to imagine a divine influence in writing that would equally account for the composition of Galatians, Proverbs, Job, and the Gospels, to say nothing of other books. I went away from the library "under conviction" that these things were so. No immediate results followed upon this silent episode, but it had its lasting influence upon my life. Strong confidence in definite theories of inspiration was not to be expected of me after that.

Although I did not in my student days depart from my inherited manner of

dealing with the Scriptures, I can now see plainly that suggestions of the historical method, unnamed and unrecognized, were creeping in. My studies in Theology and History were preparing me for larger methods though I did not know it yet, and so was my work upon the Bible itself. Textual criticism is a revolutionary thing: I have often wondered that advocates of verbal inspiration were so tolerant of it. If we cannot be perfectly sure of the very words that first were written, we cannot claim that any text in our possession is verbally inspired; and as for the idea that there was a verbally inspired and faultless text whose faultlessness was lost as soon as it was copied, the wonder is that any one ever took it seriously at all. Exegesis is revolutionary, too, and quite incompatible with permanent confidence in verbal inspiration. The practice of tracing out each writer's thought, with earnest en-

deavor to do justice to all his peculiarities of every kind, is enough to bring other ideas of inspiration into view. And since I was bending my attention to exegesis based on textual criticism, these things were certain to come home to me. I remember also certain touches of unreality in some work of interpretation that I witnessed. My teacher once made strenuous efforts to show that certain words of Paul did not bear an extremely unorthodox meaning which they very naturally suggested. I listened somewhat wondering whether Paul needed thus to be steered into orthodoxy, if I may so speak; thinking also that there was some trace of special pleading in the arguments in which my teacher was so sincere. He felt that Paul could not be unorthodox, and defended him in view of this passage by means of interpretation that needed itself to be defended. I remember also how one day I brought in my own interpre-

tation of some important verses, which appeared to me to do justice to the passage, but did not reach the denominational conclusion that was expected. I afterward reconsidered the work, with a different result, probably more correct; but I well remember the dismay with which my first result was greeted, by teacher and by class, and my own feeling that their dismay or their approval ought not to influence me as an interpreter. I remember, too, how a feeling of incredulity came over me when I was told that the Congregational church polity was revealed, and therefore bore exclusively the full authority of God. Of course I knew that this was the theory, though I did not then know how confidently the same theory was invoked in support of the other polities. But it seemed improbable that all non-congregational Christians were thus permanently and incurably unchurched by a word from heaven two thousand years ago.

On the whole, I love to recall my student days in connection with the Bible, because I was then in the freshness and sincerity of youth, and was taking genuine delight in worthy work.

Before the Sixties were half spent I was settled in a quiet parish, and using the Bible in the honest and blundering manner of a beginner in the ministry. Now came sermons, and therefore texts. Of course it took years for my young ideal of exegesis to work out into anything like good practice, and I cannot claim that my handling of texts from week to week in my first period was of a high order. I remember samples of it upon which I look back with wonder. Yet I was loyally at work. I had not many books, and when I received a present of twenty-five dollars for the benefit of my library, I invested it all in books of the exegetical type. This was much to the disgust of a

retired minister in my parish, who did not think much of "notes" on the Bible, and would have guided me in a more speculative direction. But I have never regretted my choice. I felt that a minister ought first of all to be a Bible man, and chose accordingly.

As to my studies, I found, like many a graduate, that though I could study very well in the routine of a school and at the suggestion of teachers, I did not know how to set myself at work to very good advantage when I was left alone. Hence my studying was not very well organized, and had slowly to settle down into better method and efficiency. At first I wasted time from not knowing how to direct myself. But I was helped in many ways by one enterprise of that first pastorate, which is to me as memorable as it was audacious at the time. Under some now-forgotten suggestion, I asked my people to read the Bible

through with me in a year, three chapters a day and five on Sunday, and promised them help from the pulpit as the reading went on. A good number accepted the invitation, and though some fell out by the way, Bible reading was a prominent feature in the life of the congregation in that year. I accompanied it with a course of Bible sermons, as I called them, each treating of a book in the Bible, or of a group of books. Of these sermons there were between forty and fifty in all. An accidental interruption carried the course over beyond the year, and so it happened that the latter part of the New Testament was treated a little more fully than it would otherwise have been. I had an available storehouse of information in "Smith's Bible Dictionary," which was then new and well up to date. The sermons differed among themselves in method, but in general they contained such information as I could give about authorship, date

and kindred matters: I spoke also of purpose and historical connections, and endeavored to represent the religious value and significance. In a word, I sought to provide such information as would make the Bible most intelligible and useful to the reader, aid to the religious use being quite as prominent in my mind as help to the intellectual understanding. I have not seen the sermons for many years, though I think they still exist. Certainly I would not have offered them to a congregation five years later, but I am extremely glad that I did it then, and wish I might see every young pastor undertaking as arduous and worthy a piece of work. It was a good service to my people, who appreciated it highly, and an extremely valuable service to myself, and I am very thankful that caution did not forbid courage to undertake it.

As for my own part in the benefit, the

enterprise caused the whole body of Scripture to pass before me as student and as preacher in a short time; it led me to make thorough use of the best sources of information that were then at my disposal; it taught me a mass of facts that I had never learned, and put the facts in better order in my mind; it helped me to view the Bible in something like a real historical perspective; it gave me useful practice in presenting to my hearers matter that was unfamiliar to them, and it trained me in the effort to make general knowledge spiritually serviceable. Here also I caught the idea of using results without exhibiting processes. It is easy to see how this undertaking became an important stage in my biblical education.

By the brotherly kindness of older men I was adopted into a club of ministers, in which I received great benefit and to which I owe some lifelong friendships.

I mention it now because of one piece of work that the club assigned to me, which brought forth fruit in the field of biblical considerations. At that time Herbert Spencer was just rising upon our horizon, and to me was committed the task, no small one for a youngster, of telling what it was that he was trying to convince us of. Not the whole of his philosophy was then in print, but I studied his "First Principles," in which the scheme and substance of the whole was presented. I did not know enough to make a very thorough or intelligent study of so vast a field, but I did at least obtain some idea of the essentials of Spencer's system. Here I got my first clear glimpses of the evolutionary method. They were only glimpses, it is true, and yet they did afford me a rudimentary understanding of what was meant by evolution. Little as I learned well, the fact remains that some of the fruits of that labor have never been

lost. When the time came I wrote as well as I could an account of Spencer's philosophy, and offered it to the club. I did not accept the evolutionary idea that I encountered there: probably indeed it was not so distinctly before me that I could have accepted it, in any proper sense. I cannot say that it really offered itself as a part of my mental furniture. Yet I was impressed by the simplicity and massiveness of the idea, and by the almost boundless wealth of illustration that Spencer was able to bring to its service. But my experience with it is interesting, and worth recording, because it was precisely the reproduction in miniature of the experience of the Christian world in those first years of evolutionary doctrine. Here was my objection: I knew from the Bible what was the method of God in creating the world and man, and it was not the method that Spencer proclaimed as the actual one.

The doctrine was in contradiction to the Scriptures, and that stood as reason enough for leaving it aside. This was exactly the method of the Christian world for a considerable time in dealing with the evolutionary idea. Like me, the Christian world knew God's method of creation from the Bible, where he himself had told it to his creatures, and considered the testimony of the Bible sufficient to dispose of the differing proposal of evolution.

Nevertheless, I remember a kind of dim suspicion that perhaps the question was not one that could be finally disposed of in that way. When in the manner of the period I tried to quote texts against Spencer, somehow the method did not seem to be as effective as I thought it ought to be. Any great array of good texts it was not possible to find. Moreover, I found that my brethren in the club had not counted upon having Spen-

cer convicted of unscripturalness and so disposed of, but appeared to think that some other kind of refutation would be better suited to the case if refutation were proposed. But I had done my best, and they saw that I had, and did not reproach me. The truth is that in my youthful mind two ways of endeavoring to establish truth were standing face to face, the method of authority and the method of fact, and I was beginning dimly to see how incommensurable they are. Arguments from one field did not seem to meet and answer arguments from the other, and I was left with a sense of inefficiency and disappointment. I was pained, too, for I felt that the biblical method ought to be more effective than I found it. But though I was dimly aware of this, my difficulty was not sufficiently urgent to change my attitude, and I settled down to think of the Spencerian doctrine as condemned for incompatibility with the

Scriptures. I may add that later my sympathy was somewhat drawn to the evolutionists by the crudity, ignorance, and savageness of the attacks upon them that I used to hear from some ministers.

From this club I must cite another remembrance. Once in a discussion I discovered that some of the men, older than I and better educated, were finding it difficult to fit the facts of the New Testament into the scheme of their doctrine of inspiration. The reverse process did not seem to occur to them. According to their doctrine the inspiration was outwardly attested, rather than inwardly; they believed it to be in the Bible because it was promised to be there, not because of the evidence of inspiration that was found in the quality of the book. Their argument was deductive, not inductive. The doctrine was built upon the Lord's promise to the twelve, to bring all things to their

remembrance and to guide them into all truth—which was understood to be a promise that they should write infallible Scripture about him and his gospel. So the apostles were accepted without doubt as inspired men, and the writings of Matthew, John, and Peter could be acknowledged at once as writings of the Spirit. Paul, moreover, had been adopted into the apostolate, and it was not doubted that the promise had been carried over to him. Of course there was no evidence that it had, but his apostleship was accepted as sufficient evidence, and his inspiration was unquestioned. But the writers in the New Testament who were not apostles—how were they to be gathered in under a promise that was made exclusively to another set of men? Of course they must be gathered in, for the inspired Bible contained their writings, but how? Suggestions were ready. Mark was anciently reported to be a represent-

ative of Peter, and Peter may, perhaps, have read and approved his Gospel. Luke, it was suggested, had abundant opportunity of conversation with Paul, and may for all we know have read his Gospel over to him and received his *imprimatur* upon it, making it for us equal to Paul's own work. What provision if any was made for the Epistle to the Hebrews I do not remember: perhaps it was still regarded as a Pauline writing. I hasten to say that these suggestions of possible apostolical sanction were not offered in the discussion as if they were final or well established; but I regret to say that they were offered as suggestions that were not a waste of breath. I lacked confidence to discuss the matter in that presence, and held my peace, but even then such talk seemed to me utterly worthless and absurd. I felt that it was binding the Bible to a theory, not fitting the theory to the Bible; and I had a sense

of the fact that men who had any use for it, however sincere they might be, were somehow on false ground, dealing with unrealities.

A little later I listened to an elaborate statement of the doctrine of inspiration that I had thus seen put to the test. It was not the ancient doctrine of verbal inspiration, but one considerably removed from that, although it sought in the end to make the Bible as infallible and authoritative as that doctrine made it. I remember the impression of ponderousness, laboriousness, and inconclusiveness. There was too much of it, and too much hinged upon points that could not be proved. All depended upon the promise made to the twelve, which was adopted as the centre of the whole argument; and even then I felt that it was very poor interpreting that would limit the promise of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and make it pledge infallibility

in a work of writing that was not so much as mentioned. But these glimpses of a better view were not full visions, and these thoughts remained with me chiefly as seed for future harvests.

The church of which I was pastor had suffered sadly from the Millerite excitement, expecting the second coming of Christ in 1843, and all the intervening years had not been sufficient to wear out the ill effects. The echoes of that strange experience had been in my ears from childhood. Since I became a student of the Bible I had not heard much discussion of the advent, and the most of my parish had little to say about it now, save in regretful wonder at the past. But I found in the church one man of excellent character who was still strong in the advent hope, and constant in proclaiming it. With a fine superiority he repudiated the rashness that would set a day for the

Lord's return, but he was sure that the time-signals, of which he found many in the Bible, all pointed to the year 1868, then three or four years in the future, as the time of the end. He called himself a literalist, and insisted that all that he had to do with the Bible in order to understand it was to "take it as it reads." To him, "as it reads," in the English, it bore the perfect authority of God. Studying with him one day some of his favorite passages in Daniel, I pointed to the marginal readings, and tried to show him that in their startling divergence from the page they proved how far the translators were from being sure that they knew what the meaning of the original really was. But all in vain. He had no conception of the Bible as a translated book, though of course he knew and could say that such it was. To him the words of the translation were the words of God, and he had his understanding of them,

the only possible one as he conceived, and from it he could not be moved. I saw him last about 1870. The date of hope had moved on, and the end was still coming soon.

Reflecting upon his method with the Bible, and upon the calamity of 1843, I remember questioning how it came to pass that so strange and widespread a popular delusion was possible. How, I asked, could Father Miller convince so many people, and do it so completely? Of course such excitements were no new thing, for many a generation has believed itself to be the last of earth; but how was this special excitement created? At first it seemed unaccountable, but on further consideration I became sure that I understood it. Miller's hearers were sincere Bible readers, of the ordinary literalistic kind. Without the habit of seeking light upon the page, except as light shone forth from the page itself, they were accus-

tomed to "take the Bible as it reads," regard it all in its obvious meaning as the equal utterance of God, and consider it all applicable to themselves. This was what preachers and people were wont to do, using the Bible year after year in this sincere but superficial fashion. The familiar parts of the Bible were familiar in this way. And now Father Miller came along, a godly man and a powerful preacher, aflame with new discoveries. He simply applied the very same method to the predictive and apocalyptical parts of the Bible, "taking them as they read," reading them in the light of history ill understood and mathematics misapplied, and bringing out startling and revolutionary results that he believed with faith invincible; and no one could answer him or show him to be in error, because the average mind that he addressed not only believed in the method that he employed, but knew no other.

In the churches that had a better-educated ministry his doctrine had less vogue, but with average untrained readers of the English Bible he was irresistible. The great calamity of 1843 was due to general misapprehension and misuse of the Bible. Intelligent use of the holy book would have made it impossible. Such light upon the Bible as was opening upon me in my first pastorate, I felt, would have prevented the disaster from which my parish like a multitude of others was suffering still. With rational conceptions of the Bible such things could not occur, and I desired to be helpful in preventing them from ever coming to pass again.

At the end of my first pastorate I had promise of an interesting future with the Bible, but little foresight of what it was to be. I had not exchanged my inherited view of the sacred book for another,

though I was on the way to doing so. But some things had been done. I was beginning to know how much it means that the Bible is a translated book. This was a revolutionary knowledge, which most Christians about me, and many ministers, did not possess at all. With me it had been growing from my student days, and was now becoming clear, although I still had much to learn of what is meant by so simple a fact. I was beginning to know also, in slight degree, how much it means that the Bible is a genuinely historical book, having its rise and habitat in the human world, recording vital dealings between God and men, and to be understood in the light of its historical origins, intentions, and development. No longer an unrelieved level of equal authority, it was beginning to have its hills and dales, its lights and shades, as a book of real life, the life of God in man and of man with God. It

was thus becoming more intimately my own because it was more alive, and was more available for my use in the ministry of Jesus Christ. But by what means these sound convictions were to be helped to do their wholesome work I little dreamed, nor did I imagine how great were the changes of which they held the promise.

IV

THE SEVENTIES

During the entire decade of the Seventies I was neighbor and pastor to a Theological Seminary. It would naturally be expected that such a period in a young man's life would provide an important chapter in the story of his relations with the Bible, and in my case so it did. Under various influences the story developed very gradually, perhaps more gradually than logically, but it advanced to results for which I am profoundly grateful. I was aware of this period as largely a time of harvest from my earlier life, but afterward I knew it as far more truly a seed-time.

How strange it seems to remember a

time when there was neither consciousness nor foresight of the changes that were on the way! Such was the time of which I speak. So far as they were aware, the people of my second parish were unchanged from the past in their attitude toward the Bible. They knew that knowledge was increasing, and were thankful, but increasing knowledge had not yet reached the revolutionary stage. The prevailing reverence for the book, and the prevailing manner of using it, remained essentially the same in kind as in an earlier generation. The Bible was regarded as equally inspired throughout, and inspiration meant nothing less than full divine authority. Naturally, however, the using of such a book implied interpretation, and it was only the book in its true sense, which sense a Christian must make his best endeavors to ascertain, that we were bound to accept as God's word and the rule of life; but in

its true meaning, once ascertained, the book was binding upon the understanding and upon the conscience. One was no more at liberty to doubt its statements of fact or to reject its judgments upon truth than to disobey it in conduct. In the minds of a few this serious and exacting view of the Bible was fortified by a special doctrine of its inspiration, but by the greater number it was held as a matter of reverent inherited belief; and to both classes alike the Bible was the object of sincere reverence and loyalty. I am sure that this description fairly represents the attitude of that parish toward the Bible at the time of my first acquaintance with it, when the Seventies were coming in; and I myself had by no means passed out of practical sympathy with it.

But there were influences that were surely bringing on a change. In the school of Theology for many years, until just before my coming, one of the pioneers

of modern scholarly biblical interpretation, a masterful teacher, had been guiding and inspiring his pupils to judge for themselves what is that true meaning which is binding upon mind and heart. The practice that he encouraged is more revolutionary than any one at the time was aware. In fact, the inherited belief was doomed to be altered, when once men's godliest and most scientific endeavors were devoted to the interpretation of that book to which they acknowledged absolute allegiance. When a man is set to interpret the standard that he must obey, it means that henceforth he is to obey a standard that he has interpreted. For his own mind, he has helped to determine the duty that he is required to do. But interpretation is not final. Nothing is more certain than that it will change with new light, continued study, and personal growth. Thus as interpretation advances the standard is altered, and it becomes in-

creasingly true that the student has had a share in making the standard to which his obedience is pledged. This, whatever the result may be, is on the face of it a profound change from the attitude toward the Bible that the fathers held. They said, "This is the word: we must obey it." Their children were saying, "This is the word: we must find what it means": and obedience will vary much with the meaning that they find. Such change as this was irresistibly going on in my parish, though yet mainly concealed, for there faithful men were conducting the studies from which the change must come forth. The heirs of the scholarly influence that I have mentioned were diligently continuing the work upon the Bible into which it had led them, and thus were preparing the way of a future that they did not foresee. In this they were by no means alone, for they were simply bearing their part in a large move-

ment of the time. The day was coming when examination of what the Bible teaches and requires must take effect upon conceptions of what the Bible is.

In my new parish the next stage in my own biblical education was marked out for me by imperious conditions. The work was prescribed, and not elective: I did as I must. First the method of my weekly work was dictated to me. I was a very young man in a very exacting pulpit, and the situation was no easy one. If I was not to fail, I must preach as well as I could every time. I became convinced that I could do the best work by writing my sermons; and thus it came to pass that through all the Seventies I wrote and read every sermon that I preached. So uniform was this practice that my best friends came to think that I could preach in no other way. Writing became easy, and preaching from manu-

script came to be quite compatible with fluency. The practice had its drawbacks, but it had also its great advantages, and I have never regretted that in my earlier ministry I was for ten years a writer and reader of sermons. Neither have I ever regretted that I followed that practice for ten years only.

Driven to my best work, I was driven also to my Bible. How vividly I recall my inexperienced manner of resorting to it in those days! Not yet had dawned for me that great day in a young man's life after which he knows that by the time that he has to say something he will have something to say. It came before long, but meanwhile I was nervous about getting my message in hand. The Bible was my sole resource, and I never thought of looking elsewhere for suggestions of material. I can see myself now, sitting before it and turning it over and over and over, looking through history and poetry

and prophecy and all the rest, hoping that something new or old might catch my eye and offer itself as the message of the hour. I have spent days upon days in this manner, but usually in vain. This external method of resorting to the Bible rarely gave me what I sought, and I grew more nervous rather than less while I used it. And yet I remember those anxious hours with gratitude. They were never wasted. Though I rarely found what I was looking for, I always found something that was worth looking for. The richness of the book vindicated itself, for even these hours of random communion with the Bible, though for the time they seemed wasted, always left me with something suitable to occasions that were yet to arise.

But the main point now is that I was driven to my Bible. My earlier work came to my aid when I was in need, and it came to pass that throughout this

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period I was predominantly an exegetical preacher. A biblical preacher, perhaps I ought to say, but the more specific adjective is appropriate, for the exegetical method became thoroughly characteristic of my work. A friendly comment of a student hearer once enlightened me. From a remark that he made I discovered that the students had come to expect that the introduction of my sermon would uniformly give an exegetical account of my text and offer textual justification of what I was to say. I did not know that the exegetical habit was so strong upon me, and was glad to be informed. Yet I ought not to have been surprised, for at that time I almost believed that the exegetical way was the only way to preach. A sermon, I said to myself, ought to come out of a text, and straightforward exegetical proceeding was the only right way to bring it out. Upon this theory I acted to a very great extent, though of course

not without some exceptions. By necessity a man would make exceptions, but the exegetical method directly underlay the most of my preaching. Sermons were oftener textual than topical, and the analysis was most likely to be on a textual basis. Often the text served as the key to a larger passage, and the sermon was virtually expository. I did not expound the Scriptures in a continuous way, taking a book together, for I had little confidence in my ability to sustain the interest of my congregation in a course announced beforehand; but my ordinary preaching contained a good deal of exposition. Our Sunday-school was at mid-day, and in a later service, afternoon or evening, I have reproduced and interpreted many a historical lesson. Many a Bible story have I retold, many a character have I set forth, and many a familiar scene have I placed in its local and historical setting. Many an out-of-the-way matter in the

Bible also have I brought into the open for my hearers.

In all this work it was my constant endeavor to act as a loyal and faithful interpreter. I took it as my task to find out, as far as I had the power, exactly what my passage meant in the intention of the writer; and I was not willing to give it any meaning or use that was inconsistent with its original sense. Misuse of texts seemed to me a kind of irreverence, or profanity. I can truly claim that in interpreting the Bible I was profoundly conscientious. I had to feel that my interpretation was correct before I could use my passage. I remember once being suddenly stopped in the composition of a sermon. I had written two or three pages when by some means I became informed for the first time that competent authorities gave my text a meaning practically opposite to the one that I was using. Down went my pen. I was pow-

erless to go on until I had weighed the question whether I had a right to proceed. In that instance I became convinced that my exegesis was correct, and wrote the sermon. If I had judged otherwise, it would have been unfinished until now. I am sure that in those days no listening student learned from me to be unfaithful to his Bible or indifferent to accuracy in interpreting it. Until now, indeed, I believe I can say the same. And I am sure that no one can have learned from me to seek additional interest for his preaching by turning away from his Bible. I never felt the need of that. Other fields are legitimate, but fine surprises in preaching are to be found by going farther into the biblical mine, as I have illustrated many a time.

In this endeavor after fidelity the habit of writing was very helpful. I might have had the best of intentions in preaching extemporaneously, but in un-

considered speech my painstaking interpretation might easily have been dissipated. The habit of writing tended to make me careful in doing justice to the meanings that I had found. In fact, I regard my ten years of sermon writing as a very valuable term in that course of biblical education which I am here describing.

The desire for accurate understanding of the Bible led me, as it had led my early teacher, to take an interest in textual criticism. What are the words that I am to interpret? was a necessary question, and I became deeply interested in searching it out. Of course, I was never more than an amateur in textual criticism, but I was an eager amateur, and one who attained to some little knowledge. Already in my student days, as I have said, the Received Text had retired never to return and been superseded

by Tischendorf, who held the field until the coming of Westcott and Hort, in the early Eighties. But meanwhile for daily use I exchanged his text for the New Testament of Scrivener, with its foot-notes that gave all the important various readings. My pocket Scrivener became very dear to me. Then I bought Tischendorf's eighth edition of the New Testament in its complete form, with all the critical apparatus, and made much use of it. In some degree I became acquainted with the methods and materials of textual criticism, and learned to judge for myself the true text. I never used my New Testament without the question of the correct reading in mind, and never used a text from it without considering whether it stood before me as nearly as possible in its original form. I keenly enjoyed such researches in Tischendorf as I was competent to make, and accounted these studies greatly to

my advantage as a Christian student. The interest has always continued. If I have not consulted my books so much of late, it is largely because I have gathered into memory many of the passages in which there are variant readings that would make serious difference in the sense.

Another important influence now came in. In those days commentaries were relatively much more in use than they are at present. With my method of study I was using them a good deal, and alike by the good and the evil that I found in them I was led to desire the best. So I bought Meyer on the New Testament in what was then the latest edition, and for many years Meyer was my principal counsellor in interpretation.

There were some things in Meyer that I did not prize, but I could pass them by. When he wrote, the history of interpretation was accounted more important than it is now felt to be. I imagine that

Meyer initiated the conditions in which it naturally came to be less regarded. But on any given passage, if there were any serious differences about it, he carefully reported the judgment of all important commentators. In condensed form, arranged in groups when classification was possible, he laid before me all the explanations that had reputable standing up to that date. Sometimes this was a valuable contribution, by which I was really helped. I was always glad to know the opinions of the few great exegetes, and in contested or obscure places a larger roll of witnesses was often useful. But sometimes the list seemed superfluous, and on the whole I came to feel that I was invited to give too much attention to miscellaneous judgments of men of earlier time. It did not seem to me that the best guidance was to be obtained by such comparison of opinions. But I could always leave this if I chose, and turn to Meyer himself.

For his influence I have always been profoundly grateful. I had used good books before, but I had also had experience of commentaries that dealt in allegory and fanciful renderings and interpretations that ignored historical conditions. Meyer was to me the master of sound processes, the apostle of commonsense. Occasionally I was compelled to dissent from his judgment, but usually he carried me with him. His discernment of the main point, his rational setting aside of minor matters, his clear, straightforward stroke into the very midst of a question, his lucid judgment and transparent expression, his loyalty to the spirit of Jesus which ought to rule in interpreting the gospel, all this commanded my enthusiastic admiration. He appealed to me as the most reasonable interpreter of the Scriptures that I had ever known, and I rejoiced to put myself under the leading of so able and rational a guide. The

years of his immediate influence cleared my convictions and improved my methods, and his contribution abides in my life.

It was very early in this decade that Meyer came to my help, and he was with me while I was doing the exegetical work of which I have spoken. He was my chief companion in the study that prepared me for the pulpit. He taught me how superfluous are homiletical commentaries, by doing far better for me as a preacher than they could do. Together with Meyer I came into the daily habit of using Grimm's Wilke's "Clavis," which was then the standard Greek lexicon of the New Testament, a work that was thoroughly worthy to rank with Meyer's commentary and was superseded only by the coming of Thayer, its English representative, a decade later.

I must not fail to mention certain personal influences that were upon me in

those years. Earliest among them, and latest, too, was that of the theologian to whom I looked up almost as to a father. Older than I by more than a score of years, he received me from the first into a warm friendship, which remained unaltered to the end of his days. As soon as I knew him I was attracted by the sweetness of his spirit, and also by his candor, his patience, and his well-balanced judgment. I did not always agree with him, but in all his work I knew him as the truest of men. Toward the Bible his attitude was one of the utmost reverence and loyalty. To him it brought the truth and will of God, and he joyfully acknowledged its authority upon his conscience and his intelligence alike. In his work of theological construction he considered himself bound, and limited, by what the Bible contains. To him a text was a proof; but it must be a text critically verified, fairly interpreted, and used in

accordance with its meaning. The real meaning of a text thus handled was God's meaning, and the text was God's word. He held a distinct doctrine of inspiration, but his theory was the result of his reverence for the Bible, and in no sense the cause of it. Sometimes I thought that he interpreted too theologically, and I often felt that he was too much in the power of his doctrine of inspiration, but he was never wanting to me as an example of godliness at work. The presence and fellowship of such a scholar could not fail to influence me in the use of the Bible. Preaching to him, consulting with him, and watching his work all kept the preciousness of the Bible before my eyes. At the same time his influence was strong and wholesome upon me in leading me to think for myself. His candor and quiet zeal inspired me to independent work, in which his example encouraged me to take my own way. And

if my way sometimes led me to differ with him, he would not call me back on that account.

The man of my own age who was nearest to me was teacher of New Testament Interpretation. He was one of the last pupils of the great exegete whom I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and had been called to take his place; and I was with him in the years when he was growing to his work. He was a man of immense force, keen of intellect, deep-seeing and far-seeing. By patient concentration he developed a rare exegetical sense, and became a very remarkable interpreter of the Scriptures. He was a powerful teacher, too. Contrarious students had small chance with him, and open-minded students were led by his strong reasonableness into larger thought. In teaching others he taught himself, and from stage to stage his clear-seeing mind marched steadily forward in apprehen-

sion of the Christian truth. The years brought changes in his conception of the Bible. He began, as I did, with the assumption that all the Christian doctrines were developed within the New Testament, and that our permanent standard of belief there lay before us, needing only to be interpreted. But as he went on he became better acquainted with the writers of the New Testament, and formed a different conception of their relation to Christian students of the present day. He came to think that the writers, instead of being final authority concerning divine truth, were fellow-interpreters of the gospel with himself and with all Christians. He was not bound by all their statements, but counted it his privilege to seek the light of Christ for himself by their help. He read the New Testament as the inestimably precious record of Christianity, not as its source, or as our final standard

for defining its doctrines. I remember his saying one day, "A man has no idea how great a man Paul was, or how great was his teaching, as long as he feels obliged to agree with him." Released thus from the claim of conformity, he took his place among the free searchers for the truth of God. I need not tell how helpful it was to me to have so conscientious and enterprising a student for my companion in the study of the Bible. Many a single passage and many a large meaning have I worked out with him, and my permanent indebtedness to him is very great.

Of these two personal companionships, each inspiring in its own way, perhaps it may be said, though with a margin of inaccuracy, that one would hold me where the Bible had brought me, and the other would send me wherever the Bible might lead me. But the influence of my own generation was strong upon me, as it was

upon my friend of my own age, and it was quite inevitable that I should respond, though slowly, to influences that tended to change. Slowly, I say, for it seems to me now that it took me a long time to do what appears to have been quite natural and very simple. But time is a peculiar element in such experiences. Progress from one realm of thought to another is apt to be halting and uneven: gains sometimes seem to be lost, and progressive experiences have to be duplicated. Once in one of my removals I came across a bundle of forgotten sermons about a dozen years old, and found that they gave pretty good expression to a set of ideas that I really supposed I had only just begun to hold and to preach. So little does a man understand his own journey while he is on the way. At the beginning of that dozen years I had met the ideas in question, but my acquaintance with them had been so slight that

I could forget the meeting. At the end of it they had come to live with me.

The history of the first exegetical paper that I ever published illustrates much in the movement of my mind with regard to methods of interpretation. About the middle of the Seventies I wrote an article on the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, discussing whether or not that tragic story of the divided self was intended by Paul to be descriptive of an experience in the regenerate life. I brooded long over the passage, viewing it in all the lights that I could see, and wrought out an interpretation which I felt to be correct. It seemed to me the only one that the passage would bear, and I wrote it out in full confidence. Exactly when this confidence began to desert me I do not remember, but it did desert me, and in the course of time, long after the paper had been published, I be-

came fully convinced that I had been at work on the wrong side of the question with which I began. A friend who dissents from this later judgment says that I have never answered the arguments by which I established my first conclusion. I think he feels that they have never been answered. It may be that they have not: in their own place they may be unanswerable. But I do not feel constrained to answer them, for I have ceased to regard them as arguments that are decisive of the meaning. It seems to me that my interpretation of the passage in the Seventies was a work of word-exegesis, while the one that afterward displaced it was rather a work of thought-exegesis. In the former, I was impressed by the force of certain particular expressions, which I could reconcile with only one view of the meaning of my passage; and to the requirement of these expressions I was bending the interpretation of the whole.

In the latter, I was more impressed by the general thought of the passage and the larger relations in which it stood; and when I had entered into this larger view I found that it gave new light upon the particular expressions that had formerly seemed so decisive. Under this broader treatment I saw that the passage most naturally bore the meaning that I had at first rejected; and I am sure that I was acting on the right principle when I exchanged the one interpretation for the other. I can now see that my earlier work had been more minute and special, and that in my later work I was using larger and sounder principles. A man hesitates to say that he has advanced from narrower to broader and juster methods in his work, lest he be judged guilty of conceit or of spiritual blindness. But I may be allowed to record my belief that my mind was moving in the right direction.

Perhaps I may say that I have never

had any hesitation about giving up an interpretation that I have held when a better one appeared, or about avowing the change. If I cling to what I have because it is my own, I have no assurance of finding that which is the Lord's. I am reminded that before the same body of ministers I have read two papers, a few years apart, on what is called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, maintaining two opposite views of the matter. The difference between them was very much like the difference between my two views of the seventh chapter of Romans. The earlier interpretation was narrowed in this case also by too exclusive attention to special terms: the later was broadened by the free admission of general principles. My conviction in favor of the latter was a conviction of sounder and worthier kind than its predecessor. At first I said, "The Scriptures limit me to this": later I said, "The Scriptures open my way to

this." At first I was regarding the restraints of the Bible: afterward I was following out its spirit.

The decade of the Seventies was the period of Lives of Christ and similar books, and I, like all my generation, came thus under a healthful influence. Not that the entire contribution of the Lives of Christ was either permanent or essentially valuable. Most of them have already been left behind, and in general the idea that a genuine biography of our Master can be written is passing away. We are learning that our materials are not of the right kind for such work. Nevertheless, the Lives of Christ brought us a genuine blessing. They were the popular and effective part of a large movement to bring him out of the region of dogmatic conceptions, partly unreal, into the realm of real life. To vivify our mental image of Jesus the modern knowledge

of history, geography, and archæology brought its treasures, and the great theme was presented by an imagination enlightened by this new knowledge, as well as by the old love and reverence. The apostolic history, too, was enriched by the same manifold contribution. But the main point was that study of the Saviour of the world, from being a study of doctrinal conceptions, now became study of a living person, into which all the wealth of this illuminating knowledge was poured.

My own share in this benefit was just such as I have now described. For me Jesus really took his place among the living facts of history, more vividly than ever before. The Old Testament had never ceased to glow with the light it had received in the days of my first pastorate from Stanley's "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church," and now the New Testament received a similar illumination. Here I am indebted to a

book that did not long remain among my counsellors. Farrar's "Life of Christ" even then seemed much too rhetorical for its subject, and much too ingenious in piecing the narratives together and building up meanings that depended upon the combination; but despite its faults it did give my mind a powerful impulse toward conceiving Jesus Christ as real. His "Life and Work of Paul" brought similar help toward living in the midst of the apostolic age. Other books stood in the same helpful company. Out of this period of biography there came to me an influence that made the whole New Testament more full of the glow and interest of life. But more important than this general result was the distinctness, the practicality, the living force, that these studies imparted to my conception of Jesus Christ himself. The Jesus of my later years is the Jesus that rose before my vision in the divine beauty of his

human life under the influence of this period of biographies. And I wish to call attention to the fact that this new vitalizing of my conception of Jesus Christ is an essential element in that change concerning the Bible which these reminiscences are intended to record.

An influence of quite another kind now came in effectively to modify my conception of the Bible, and I can truly say that in the resulting change I was following whither the Bible itself led me. I have never been urgently interested in the subject of the second advent, and yet that subject has filled a more prominent place in my religious history than one would expect. I was brought up in a way that promised trouble, for I was taught in my childhood that the kingdom of Christ had a long and glorious future in this present world, and yet that the end was always imminent, and any day he might

descend from heaven for judgment. The theory put the end indefinitely far away, and yet I listened trembling for the trump of God in every thunder-storm. Some time, of course, this contradiction would have to be disposed of; and in fact this was one of the first regions in which my views of the Bible began to be clarified.

During the Seventies I was usually in attendance upon a weekly conference of ministers living in and about a city, at which all sorts of religious and theological topics were discussed. More than once in the decade the advent question was taken up, being a question that men were interested in discussing as they are not now, and on both sides of it I heard as able advocates as our denomination contained. The premillennial and postmillennial views of the advent were presented, elaborated, and defended, sometimes with conspicuous power. It was not in vain, though the results were not such as the dispu-

tants were seeking. In consequence of the discussion several things became clear to me, some at once and some on further reflection.

The first thing that I observed was that neither of the two theories could be better defended from the Bible than the other. Either could be defended perfectly well, by making proper selection of proof-texts. The Bible contained the confident prediction of an early advent, and at the same time it contained an outlook upon the future that neither included an early advent nor had place for one. I observed that both doctrines were obtainable from the Bible, but was impressed by the fact that neither one was the doctrine of the Bible as a whole. In the sense of being found in the Scriptures, both were scriptural; but in the better sense of rightly representing the Scriptures, neither was scriptural. The contesting theories had been too successful in debate: each by

its very success had destroyed not only the other but itself.

At first I did not see how much this meant, but gradually it came to me, and a very important change in my convictions was a necessary result. It was borne in upon me that the Bible contains material for two opposite and irreconcilable doctrines about the early return of Christ to this world. Both doctrines cannot be true: one of them at least must rest upon misjudgment. Since this is the fact, it certainly cannot be that I am required to believe all that the Bible says because the Bible says it. If either one of the theories is true, no matter which, I certainly am not bound by the testimony that the Bible bears in favor of the other. Whatever its nature may be, the book in which these facts are found cannot have been given me by God as a book that bears his own authority in support of all its statements.

The book from which these two theories can be drawn is of necessity a different book from that. Thus the Bible itself, upon examination, shows me that it is not a book infallible throughout, in which error does not exist, and that I am not required to say that it is. This negative statement followed plainly from the discussion.

Of course the corresponding positive statement was just as evidently true. The discussion showed that upon one point at least the early Christians, including apostles and writers of the New Testament, were mistaken—not only could be mistaken, but were. They believed that their Lord was soon to return to this world in visible glory. He did not so return: hence they cherished an expectation that was wrong. This I was required to affirm on the authority of facts, even though the disappointed expectation stands recorded on the pages of the Bible. I was required to affirm it in fact; on the

authority of the Bible itself. Of this I could have no doubt. It is true that I heard some of the best men I knew laboring hard to show that the expectation did not exist, but their labor was in vain. I saw that it did exist, and that it proved to be a false expectation. Arguments to the contrary were quibbles, well-meant though they were. At present, of course, the intense vitality of the advent hope is one of the commonplaces of New Testament knowledge. No one who professes scholarship at all ever thinks of doubting it. At that time, however, understanding of the matter was less advanced, and it is less surprising than it would be now that the fact could be argued against. Nevertheless, upon me the truth was dawning: how could it fail to dawn? I perceived that writers in the Bible had recorded unquestioning expectation of the almost immediate occurrence of an event that has never occurred at all. Certainly they

were in error on that point. Their inspiration, of whatever kind it was, was not a safeguard against this error, but allowed them, or rather perhaps impelled them, to work their mistaken view of the immediate future into our holy book.

From all this it followed that I was not obliged to agree with these writers in all that they had written, or to look upon them as infallible guides. It did not follow that therefore I ought to throw the Bible away, and I am thankful that that foolish suggestion so often supposed to attend upon such discoveries did not occur to me. But it did follow that I was not required to accept all statements in the Bible as true and all views that it contained as correct. Apparently I was a free reader, not a reader upon whom assent was obligatory. Apparently I might judge its statements in view of facts. And it was not some outside heretic or unbeliever that was persuading me to this conclu-

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sion: I was led to it by examination of the book itself. Its own contents bore witness to its errancy—to use a word with which I afterward became familiar. In coming to this judgment I was simply going whither the Bible led me. As I look back I wonder on what ground I ought to have proceeded if I was to judge otherwise. What would any friend advise? How, starting from the facts that I first encountered, should I have reached the conclusion that all statements in the Bible were binding upon me?

I have said that I moved slowly and unevenly in the change that I am now recording. I have dated this conviction against the inerrancy of the Bible here in the Seventies, and here it belongs, for at this time it was planted in my mind and I began to be aware of its presence and its importance. But its growth was gradual, and its victory over my thinking was slow in coming—surer perhaps for

being slow. Years passed before it came to its own. This is no wonder, in view of my early training. Nevertheless, when the new conception had made so valid an entrance it deserved well of the future, and was sure to do its work.

Not from without myself, but from within, came the next great modification of my view of the Bible. The hint indeed was external, but no more. The field was doctrinal. At various times already I had given some study to various doctrines of the Christian religion. In my first pastorate I studied, as well as I could, the doctrine of sin, and made some gains that were permanent. But what I now entered upon was not so much a study as an experience. Now for the first time I was impelled, and compelled, to work my way through from obscurity to clear light, upon one of the great historical Christian doctrines.

One Sunday, late in the Seventies, I was conversing with a Sunday-school class about the fourth chapter of the First Epistle of John. We were talking of the words, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Of course the conversation turned upon the atonement, which was a fixed point in the doctrinal belief of us all. I do not remember what was said by any of us, but I do remember how the impression was borne in upon me that I did not know what the familiar passage meant. I confessed to myself that in my heart I did not know what an atonement was, or what was meant when the Son of God was called the propitiation for our sins. I had always believed in the atonement of Christ, in the ordinary manner, which is not a very vital manner. While I was a student I had worked out a sketch of the history of the doctrine, and had some

conception of the course of Christian thought on the subject. I had never supposed myself to be holding any very definite theory of the atonement. As a matter of fact, like most ministers then and now, I had held a group of ideas that represented fragments of various theories which, if I had analyzed them, I should have found ill-assorted and inconclusive. I had long been dimly aware that in the centre of that doctrine there lay a region that I had never adequately explored. I had not been especially uneasy about it, for I knew the subject to be mysterious, and had not blamed myself for not understanding it; moreover, I had been occupied with other works and studies, and the question had not forced itself upon me. But now it claimed its rights. On that Sunday afternoon I went home under the spell of a new compulsion, for I knew that from that hour I was called to find out for myself what the atonement was. It

proved that I was right. There was no rest for me till I had worked the problem through. Not in agony, it is true, and yet with all earnestness, I bent to the work.

I read some books on the doctrine, without finding anything that went to the bottom of it. I remember reading a book that was then offering itself as a standard on the subject, rushing eagerly along in suspense till I should reach the conclusion that I saw held out before me in the final chapter, only to find it vague and lame and unsatisfactory. I remember another book, that claimed to be all biblical; but its very abundance of biblical language weighed it down with a hopeless burden of ambiguities. I studied the Bible faithfully. But I found there various views of what Christ had done—one set of ideas in Paul, another in the Johannine writings, and another in the Epistle to the Hebrews. I perceived that these

were views of the great reality from various points, and that they could not be combined into one clear doctrine. I perceived, too, that it was not possible for any mind to agree with all these utterances, except in the broadest sense, if indeed a modern mind could really think any of them precisely as the writers thought them long ago. So I could not solve my problem by adducing the testimony of Scripture concerning the atonement as clear and final.

But I was not seriously troubled by being thus left without an authoritative statement, for my subject was drawing me on in another direction. The question before me was not one that could be decided for me by authoritative statements unless I was content with the most external kind of explanation; and I was seeking nothing less than the genuine interior meaning. The question was, What is it that the good God and Father of Jesus

Christ has done in him for us in our sinfulness? If this could be answered by a text or a formula, still, I should have to inquire what the text or formula meant, for it would not serve my necessity at all, except as it embodied some large spiritual principle. And I now saw clearly in what region the question lay. It lay in the realm of ethics. The decisive fact is the character of God. The God whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us has acted in accordance with what he is. In this work he has acted out his real self. It was morally impossible for me to believe that he has done anything for our salvation that does not accord with and express his own character. If a voice of inspiration or a voice from heaven had told me that he had, I should have been compelled to say that the voice was not from God. And if I am to find out what he has done, I must find it out not at the dictation of voices, whether from earth or heaven, but in the

light of the ethical and spiritual principles that the revelation of Christ gives me to be the guides of my inquiry. That is to say, God does not dictate to me an explanation of his gracious work. If I wish to understand it better, I must search it out in the light of God himself.

So I found myself doing just what I felt that I had been commissioned to do: I was inquiring for myself what the atonement was—not what the Old Testament had foreshadowed, or what Paul thought it was, or what it seemed to be in the light of the Jewish law, or what the church had taught, or what theologians had built up into doctrine, but what it really was, in the best moral and spiritual light that the Christian revelation ministered to the inquiry. To do a man's work in this great quest was my business for the time, and I could no more take my conclusion from dictation of the Bible than I could from dictation of the church.

I was constrained to go back of both. I must search out for myself how the principles of the divine character had been wrought out in a work of help for sinful beings: and this I found myself bending my best energies to do. The Bible was my indispensable and invaluable helper in the quest, but it had not been offered to me by God as containing the ready and final answer to my question, as I once supposed it had. The answer I myself must find.

For months I was held to my task by a power from which there was no escape —from which indeed I had no desire to escape. It was a great experience; for now, under an impulse that I knew to be from God, my best powers were for the first time grappling with the prime moral facts of existence. I had been handling divine realities all my years, but never until now had I been under such strong and joyful constraint in dealing with

them. Such labor could not be in vain in the Lord, and to me it was richly fruitful.

After a time, when I had begun to be satisfied that my work was yielding true results, I embodied my conclusions in a paper, which I entitled, "The Saving Interposition of God." Naturally it consisted of two parts, a negative and a positive, or a destructive and a constructive, if one chooses to call them so. Naturally also, the first part was better than the second. In the first part I brought out the ethical principles of the divine character, which the Christian revelation has brought to light, and allowed them to sweep away such elements in the inherited doctrine of the atonement as could not abide in their company. They swept much away. I felt, and still feel, all things considered, that this indispensable preliminary work was well done. I certainly set forth some unquestionable truths, by which some ancient statements

of the doctrine of salvation were rendered impossible. I did not need to prove the impossibility of these, for the ethical positions that I advanced carried their own evidence. Having thus cleared the ground I proceeded to constructive work, endeavoring to set forth the true doctrine. But I had not yet followed my problem far enough to be thoroughly ready for the constructive task, and it was only natural that the second part should not satisfy me so well as the first. Yet even in this more exacting field I know that I presented some affirmations that belong to the body of eternal truth, and offered a doctrine more in accordance with the divine character revealed in Christ than any that I had ever been taught.

I read the paper before a club of ministers of which I was a member, where it was variously received, as I expected. It was never published, but it had a considerable circulation by lending. Men of

my own age, many of them, were eager to be led into more simple and spiritual thought upon this great theme, and welcomed a comrade's work. Several times for months together the paper was out of my possession, travelling from hand to hand. As much as twelve or fifteen years later I received a request for the loan of it, from a man who was beyond the original circle of its acquaintance. How far the readers agreed with it I do not know, but it helped them to think in normal fashion, to accept their freedom of rejecting the untenable, and to apply their best moral judgment to the apprehension of divine truth. The subject was alive for them, and my treatment of it, springing from my own soul, was recognized as a vital work.

It now seems to me strange and rather sad that I had lived well toward my fortieth year without encountering that strong inward necessity that compelled me to

make my doctrine my own. But I fear there is reason to believe that many ministers live as long, or longer, perhaps even all their lives, without experiencing this particular kind of work of grace in their souls. A work of grace it is, and any man is to be congratulated who hears and answers this call of God to better knowledge of divine realities. With me the experience was not an agonizing struggle, but if it had been it would still have been a gift to be thankful for.

This story has its rightful place in the present narrative, because this experience counts very largely in the history of my relation to the Bible. The work of years had brought me up to a point where I was ready for a method different from that which I had followed before. I may describe my forward step by saying that hitherto I had been using the Bible in the light of its statements, but that now I

found myself using it in the light of its principles. Its great revealed truths, rather than its special declarations, were guiding me in the study to which I was now impelled. I was not asking what the Bible specifically said upon my theme, but was taking the large truths that the Bible brought me, and wielding them as my instruments in a spiritual work of inquiry. I was not collecting the testimony of authoritative passages; I was moving in the spirit of the Bible toward apprehension of the great salvation of God. Thus in my investigation I was using the Bible as a man naturally and rightly uses helps to knowledge—not that he may serve them, but that they may serve him. I was acting on the principle that the Bible was made for man, not man for the Bible, as I am sure the Master would have me act. I was exercising my Christian freedom in seizing the great principles of divine revelation, and using them

for further exploration of the works of God. In thus applying the great principles of revelation I was doing exactly what Paul and the writer to the Hebrews had done before me. They sought out the meaning of the divine gospel of redemption in days when it meant something to talk of the Jewish law: I was called to do the same in days when the Jewish law belongs to the far past, and universal ethical principles must be the guiding light, and the character of God revealed in Christ is the decisive test. This work, so like the work of prophets and apostles, I was not afraid to undertake, for I had come out into the liberty of the sons of God, where I could freely take my Father's revelation as the guide of my personal endeavor. At the end of these studies I was another man than on that Sunday afternoon when my face was turned toward the new investigation. Far more truly than ever before I had

entered upon freedom of inquiry, and a broad world was before me, which I was sure that I should find to be the world of God. And the Bible had become the instrument of my liberty.

V

THE EIGHTIES

At the very beginning of the Eighties a great change came to all my mental operations through a change in the scene of my work. From my pastorate of the Seventies I went to another which was as unlike it as possible in the conditions of life and thought. I carried myself with me, and all my past, but no man could be the same in the two places. Any man would be changed by such a transfer: that is, to speak after the manner of the operation of God, he would be developed, the new atmosphere stimulating in some new manner the growth of his mind. In my case, changes began at once. For one thing, I immediately threw off the

practice of reading sermons. That is to say, I threw it off as a regular practice from the very first day in my new field, and my bondage to it, such as it was, fell away. I wrote and read when I chose, and preached in all ways between that and purely extemporaneous work. This emancipation the spirit of the new environment brought me, and evidently this was an exercise of freedom that tended to the enlargement of freedom. This in general was the characteristic of the new life upon which I now entered, that I found greater liberty in my mental and spiritual movements than before. I stood as a freer man. I can see plainly now that the experience which I have just narrated had been leading me straight out into the larger place in which I found myself; but I did not understand it so well then.

I was not designing any new methods in the use of the Bible, but expected sim-

ply to go on using it as I had done hitherto. At first I was doing no special work with it, except in preaching. But in preaching I felt the new liberty and exaltation. Utterance was more and more a delight. With this new joy came naturally a fresh enjoyment in the wealth of the Scriptures. Never more than in those days have I enjoyed bringing out of the treasury things new and old, and at no period have I found larger things in the treasury to be brought forth. But though I was not planning new methods with the Bible, I was using them. It was impossible that my experience in searching out the atonement should be without immediate and valuable fruit in my ordinary work. In preaching now it was impossible that I should refrain from using the Bible as I had discovered my right to use it then. The bygone conditions could never be restored. I was handling the Bible now more personally, more as my-

self, and more as if I had a right to handle it. I still practised exegesis with undiminished fidelity, but the process was further removed from my sermonizing than before. My message was not so directly borrowed from the Bible as in former years, and was more suggested or inspired by it. Not the sight of my eyes upon the page, so much as the experience of mind and heart with its truths, was placing it at my disposal. Around me were many who seemed to me to reverence the Bible more for what it was than for what it contained; but for my part I was prizing it now for what it contained, and was using my Christian liberty, as manfully as I might, to make its spiritual message clear, unhampered, and effective.

It scarcely need be added that my theology was changing meanwhile, for neither the outcome nor the method of my work on the atonement could allow it to stand

unaltered, and in the new atmosphere of liberty I was certain to advance. The process of change consisted mainly in this same thing, that I was taking up the great truths of revelation, and using them for myself as truths, and following them to their application and result in doctrine, and allowing them to assimilate whatever could live with them and expel whatever could not. This I conceive to be the right way to form one's doctrinal conceptions. This revolutionary and reconstructive work, which is the proper work of truth as it is in Jesus, was taking a place in my life that it had not held before. The time was a period of enlargement to me, and of enlargement that I felt to be normal to a child of God. The experience was defective enough through fault and weakness of my own, but it was a genuine experience of growth into more abundant life. And if I were to give it a name,

I should call it a passing over from traditionalism to reality.

Now it was that the Revised New Testament appeared. The first copy of it that I saw was sent to me by a religious newspaper, to be read and reported upon. I welcomed it with all my heart, and used it in public worship, from the first Sunday. One of my men, seeing it in my hand on that first Sunday morning, said, "I hate that." But I was able to convince him that he had not hated wisely, or understood the book that he hated. How glad I was when it came! I remembered back into the days when revision of King James's Bible was discussed among American Christians, and recalled the bitterness of the opposition—opposition grounded largely in failure to understand the fact that the Bible is a translated book, and still more in that reverence for the familiar words which sprang from

belief in verbal inspiration. I had had my hereditary hesitations about revision, but they were long since vanished. And now, when I was barely in middle age, the prejudice against revision had already been so far overcome that the book was actually in my hands, issued with splendid backing on both sides of the Atlantic. Doubtless it was not perfect, and it had still to win its way, but the beginning of improvement had been made, the new conditions had been established, and the good result was sure. Now, I said to myself, those things that I had known to be true about many a passage, but which the people could not know except through explanations which they might deem pedantic, and destructive, too, could be known to all readers. Now, when this book had won its way, the thoughts of the Bible would be more independent of the words: there was some chance that people who hung upon the very words of

Scripture might come to glory in the preciousness of the very thoughts and the very truths. Now was doomed that narrow reverence for the very words which gathered around the impossible doctrine of verbal inspiration. For the coming of this book was only a part of a great movement of the age toward making the Bible and Christ and divine religion more real to the people, a movement in which I with joy would bear my little part. When the Revised Old Testament appeared, four years later, there was less of thrill and glow in the reception of it, but the welcome was the same in principle. The Bible was now more ready to my hand, for the uses to which I was called to put it. I grasped the Revision as a better weapon for the warfare of the Lord.

It was at this time that my first book was written, a Commentary on the Gos-

pel of Mark, for a series on the New Testament, issued by a denominational publishing house. By no fault of mine, the writing was crowded into a very short period, and for months I almost thought of nothing else. But the work was done with eagerness and joy. New thoughts about the Bible were not diminishing my zest for it. I was now studying the Lord's life in its simplest and most vivid form, and it was a perpetual delight to comment upon the doings of the living Jesus.

My manner of treating the Scriptures was not satisfactory to all my readers: in fact, it was suspected by many, and condemned by some. At present, however, it would have good standing as conservative, so far has conservatism moved on. It is true that I had little occasion to speak of the nature of the Scriptures, or to raise the question of their inspiration; but when I went right on interpreting my Gospel in the best light of reality that I

could obtain, without regard to any theories at all, some thought me to be on dangerous ground. The only paragraph in which I alluded to inspiration contained the remark, which seems to me to have been tenable, that the Bible is inspired as it is inspired, and not as we may think it ought to be inspired. This was stricken out by the editorial secretary of the publishing society, with the remark that my views of inspiration, whether correct or not, were far in advance of those of the denomination. This may have been true. I thought that whatever inspiration there might be in the book must be determined by the qualities of the book, not identified by reference to a definition or theory framed outside. I well remember the strong dissent with which years earlier I encountered a definition intended to safeguard Christianity, to the effect that inspiration is that divine influence in writing which produces an

infallible record. I felt that the definition approached the subject from the wrong side: if the Bible is inspired, we must learn from the Bible itself what the qualities of its inspiration are. It was this that I was trying to say, in the passage that was unacceptable. But as a matter of fact, I was not writing on inspiration: I was simply commenting on the book that lay before me, without inquiring what qualities of inspiration it might possess, or how it came to have them.

Work upon one Gospel naturally made all the Gospels more familiar. It was a part of my task, in fact, to compare them and note their identities, resemblances, and differences. Inevitably the differences came to light—differences not only in phraseology but in narrative, in discourse, and in general portrayal. In statements of fact and in views of truth I found them more or less divergent. The

point here to be recorded is that these differences suggested to my mind no difficulty as to the acceptance of the Gospels and their testimony. Of course they were fatal, as I had long known, to the claim of perfect accuracy in all the records, and of an inspiration that would produce it, but they were not fatal to confidence in the books. The writing of this commentary cured me of confidence in the possibility of harmonizing the Gospels with much completeness, or of weaving them into a continuous narrative, and placed them before me as separate witnesses, differing as witnesses will differ. When they had taken this position there was no trouble about accepting their general testimony: there was nothing in variations to invalidate their story, and I could read them as living records of a real life. At that time the problem of the Gospels was simpler than it is now, and many present-day questions I did

not meet. Nevertheless, the principle that gave me confidence then gives me confidence still. My hold upon the central Person and his story is such that changes in my conception of facts about the Gospels have not shaken my faith.

Now again the doctrine of the second advent took a disproportionately prominent place in my affairs. It was necessary that I should explain the thirteenth chapter of Mark, the great eschatological discourse, the dread of expositors—unless indeed it chances to be their delight. It was the part of my task that I dreaded most, for I was well aware of the difficulty of the passage, and certain that I could not stand for any of the old interpretations. But I had been thinking more or less in that field, ever since the discussions of the advent that I have spoken of. Moreover, in the late Seventies a book treating the general subject

of terrestrial eschatology had appeared, and had been much read and discussed in the circle of my acquaintance. The book was crude in some respects, and was far from uttering the last word in the constructive part, but it was unanswerable in its refutation of certain long-accepted doctrines, and at least it prepared the way for something better. It has now gone out of sight, for it lacked some of the qualities that make for permanence; but it freed many of us from inherited untenable views of the second coming, and offered us at least a tentative doctrine in their place. Under this influence I wrought out an interpretation of the difficult chapter which satisfied me at the time, and this I embodied in my commentary.

It is interesting to note what this interpretation was, for the nature of it indicates again how far from being even and consistent was the movement of my

mind. I have spoken of the growing conviction that the early advent hope was disappointed. This conviction was steadily settling into certainty, and yet at this time I was fascinated by the claim that the hope had not been disappointed. I still felt that the prediction of an early advent must have been fulfilled, and that the fulfilment must be sought in the early history. So I accepted the idea that the fulfilment occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem. The taking of this position was not a consistent step in my progress, and yet it is quite accounted for by that blending of old influences and new to which every advancing mind is subject.

Knowing that my interpretation would be objected to, I purposely made my presentation of it just as positive and convincing as I could, in order that it might have as good a chance of favor as I could give it. As for the interpretation itself, it now seems to me to have been a very

good way-station on the journey to the true solution of the problem. At the time, however, it was the best that I could do, and it was farther along the road than most of my readers were prepared to go. As I expected, it suited almost no one. After the first edition, the publishing society obtained another commentary on the chapter from an older man, embodying one of the more accepted views, and bound it into the book at the end of my chapter, under the title of "An Additional View." To this I had no objection whatever, and cordially gave the consent which the society courteously asked. At any rate, I had made my contribution toward a substitute for the old untenable views, and that was as much as I could hope to do.

As for the commentary itself, it contains much that I should now be glad to set right, for I can see in it many marks of immature judgment and insufficient

knowledge. But the writing of it marked a great step in the forward movement of my mind in dealing with the Bible. It was the first large work of a new outspokenness. Views that had mastered me and become my own I was daring to offer to a larger company; and such work always takes hold upon the future of a man's own mind. In my case it was a preparation for still larger use of Christian liberty of thought and speech in handling the holy book. And my commentary occupied its place, though a very small one, in the progress of the general thought about the Bible.

In the city where I lived there were many warnings against crude though reverent use of the Bible. I came across much influence of the Plymouth Brethren, whose attitude toward the Bible was reverent almost to the point of worship, but who seemed to me utterly to miss the

point, and to be making of the Bible the very thing that God never intended it to be. Under this influence profoundly ignorant persons were exhorted to regard their own understanding of the Bible as unquestionably the interpretation of the Holy Ghost—usually with the result of a most comfortable superiority to all other Christians. I met with much interpretation that claimed to be simple literalism; and I was confirmed in my old conviction that there is no man who will find more fanciful meanings than the average literalist. I found people who were using the Bible to identify the British nation with the lost ten tribes, whereby they brought over to the existing British Empire all the promises of God to Israel. I knew many who found prediction of great things yet to come in what seemed to me passages of plain and simple meaning. The handling of unfulfilled prophecy, indeed, was a favorite employment with very many,

who deemed this one of the most important uses of the Bible. In a farmhouse I met a godly soul who said he had long desired to see me, because he wished to get my views on the millennium; but I fear he obtained less from me than he had hoped. I knew a village where the favorite topic of conversation when the people met was the return of the Jews to Palestine. I remember a man, a somewhat professional interpreter, I think, in his own little circle, who asked me for my view of a certain passage of Scripture, of which an elaborate explanation entered into his framework of doctrine. When I had given him my understanding of it, he looked up at me with a fine expression of surprise and puzzlement upon his countenance. "Is that it?" he said: "you'll spoil me—it's so simple." There was danger indeed, for elaborateness was necessary to satisfy him. I once said to a man that I did not think the Bible was

intended to provide us with a map of the future, whereupon he exclaimed, "Well! then I don't know what the word revelation means." When I said, "Revelation of God," the words seemed to make no impression on his mind. And once I went, a few minutes late, into a prayer-meeting of another church than my own, which a deacon, in default of a minister, had been unexpectedly called to lead. When I entered he was saying that he had had absolutely no opportunity for preparation, and could only read a passage from the Epistle to the Galatians, as he had just done, and offer as his contribution to the meeting a thought that had been with him much of late, namely, how good God is, to let us Gentiles in to the privileges of the Jews. So near, and no nearer, his mind had come to the religious situation of the present age.

By no means would I represent that the general Christian community used the

Bible in these strange and misleading ways, for that would be a slander. Very much of devout and intelligent use of the Scriptures there was, and I have never enjoyed sweeter fellowship over the Bible than I enjoyed with some Christians in that time and place. Nevertheless there was an immense amount of such unfortunate work, and it all seemed to me a sad perversion of the sacred book. I plainly saw that what was needed was a different conception of the whole matter from beginning to end. No mending-up would answer: these groups of earnest people needed a revolution in their entire conception of the book that they were both using and misusing. They held in their hands, as they understood the case, an infallible book, equally full of revelation in all its parts, and all addressed to them: and this book they were uncritically and unscientifically reading, taking their impressions of it as the word of God. When the book

was thus viewed and used, the perversions that I was lamenting quite naturally followed. It was natural that the recondite parts should be the most fascinating, and that the unintelligible parts should seem to offer the best prospect of fresh revelation to the reader. It was natural, too, in certain stages of mental training, that the reader's interpretation should seem to him to partake of the infallibility of the book that he was interpreting. It was natural that the Bible should thus come to be regarded as a storehouse of mysterious information, rather than as a spiritual guide of life. There was need of a revolution: and I understood the case well enough to know that the only effective revolution must follow the line in which my own mind was moving. The mistaken methods must give way to a free, intelligent, and reverent handling of the Bible as it really is. Of course this sense of need intensified my convic-

tions. By sad observation of the sufferings of the Bible in the house of its friends, I was confirmed in my judgment as to the treatment that Christians ought to give it. This manifold discovery of the tremendous necessity urged me on in my course, and in those years I labored with my best powers to set a clear and safe example in rational use of the holy book.

But I remember an incident of this period that shows how uneven my progress was. It illustrates also the various lights in which the uniqueness of the Bible may be viewed. One Sunday evening there strolled in to hear me a pair of scientists with whom I had a slight acquaintance, one of them rather eminent in his generation. Afterward I wondered what they thought. I do not remember what my text was, but it was one of the condensed expressions of truth that abound in the First Epistle of John. I spoke of this

epistle as later in origin than the book that stands at the close of the Bible, and as occupying a place at the very end of the long course of divine revelation. I appealed to its testimony as the last and highest word, the ripened fruit of God's great revealing process, the very climax of that which has come from him to his world of men. I spoke, in fact, as if nothing had been heard from God since that epistle was written. I did not know at the time how far away I was putting God from his world. But the retributive power did not overlook me. After a while a wave of remembrance swept over me, to my humiliation, and I wondered what my scientific acquaintances thought that I, a Christian minister, believed about the living God. If they believed in God at all, as I think they did, they believed in a God who did not close his work of self-expression and betake himself to silence eighteen hundred years ago, but who

"worketh hitherto," a God self-uttering as the light; and I had been addressing them as if God had been silent to men through all these ages. I wish I might have the opportunity of preaching to them now; but one of them is gone to the other life, and the other I shall never meet.

I remember a similar limitation upon my thought at an earlier date. One evening in my study long ago I had in my hand a volume that contained only two or three of the shorter Epistles: probably it was a commentary: and I remember reflecting upon what it would be if that were the entire Bible, the sum of revelation, the whole of what I had or was to have from God. How earnestly, I thought, would I search the volume through and through, eager to miss nothing of that unique treasure, to which nothing would ever be added! In the Bible, I said to myself, I had more than in that little book, but with equal eagerness I ought

to search through that unique possession, the revelation of God. Revelation I was then regarding as something begun and ended, done and finished, written and preserved, gathered into one place, different from anything else that God has given or will give to men. Even as late as my preaching to the scientists the influence of that conception had not passed away, and later still it was upon me, though in diminished power. I was right in holding the Bible as a unique book, uniquely precious; but when one thinks of the living God, near to his human creatures and the same forevermore, it cannot be that he has given men no word of revelation from himself since it was finished. To know God as Jesus has revealed him is to know better than that.

I have spoken of the hand of Paul as lying heavy upon the activities of Christian women. For me the traditional def-

erence for the Pauline prohibition long continued; but in the three parishes that I have spoken of there was a curious succession of attitudes on the subject of women in the church, which became an element in my biblical education.

In the first parish the general understanding was that Paul forbade the women to take part in the meetings of the church; and yet there was a peculiar line of unconscious compromise. The women seemed to have a habit of confidence in the pastor as interpreter and representative of Paul. If he thought that Paul's prohibition was not binding upon them, they would feel free to speak; but if he disapproved on Pauline grounds, the most of them would not speak at all, and those who did would have some constraint in doing so, or at least some consciousness. In this way my opinion obtained an exaggerated importance. I was not understood to be very rigid in judgment

against the woman's right, and I was not, for in fact I wanted all the gifts in the little church to be in use, and did not conceal the desire—and a large half of the gifts were feminine. But at the same time Paul made me timid and half-hearted about it: it became known that I understood him to be against us, and there was constraint upon the women. There were exceptions, but this was the rule. Their activity did not increase in my day. I think it rather diminished.

The training of my second parish had been rigidly Pauline for generations, and the atmosphere was full of the great apostle's influence. Rarely was a woman's voice heard in the church, his judgment of silence being accepted as the judgment of God. There was some private dissent, but the public sentiment, so to call it, was of one effect. The women of the parish were nobly going out into activities of larger and more important

significance, against which no inspired voice had been lifted up; in fact, a large missionary organization of women had its origin there in my time; but in the church, with rare exceptions, even the women of the largest gifts were silent. In this parish, however, the young people's meeting came in as an institution in my time, and in this the girls began freely and simply to do what their mothers had not dared, or even desired, in the face of an inspired apostle. Various excuses were made for this, though not by the young people themselves. Some used to suggest in those days that perhaps this was not a meeting of the church, and did not come under Paul's prohibition. Similar excuses were offered for the larger use of women in public work which was coming in. As to my understanding of Paul's words and intention, I had not changed; but gradually there was dawning upon me the improbability of God's intending

to govern our movements in America through Paul's directions to the church in Corinth two thousand years ago. The method did not seem like the reasonable God. At the same time the quibbling arguments by which I heard good men evading the prohibition wearied me, and were almost enough to convert me. Thus the old influence was slipping away, and I did not blame myself.

In my third parish, with its brisker movement of life, all was changed. The women were taking part in the meetings of the church, as many of them as wished to do so, with perfect freedom. They knew all about the arguments for reading Paul's prohibition as local and temporary, at least the Corinthian one, and so had no fear that they were sinning against the Scriptures. But the real reason of their freedom was that in this matter they were not governed by Paul any more. Some of them had fine gifts for speaking and

something to say, and would have found some way to speak their minds if Paul himself had been there with all the weapons that he was supposed to carry. They were acting out their real life from the heart, and the ancient hand was off from them. A few years of such freedom lifted it from me. I came to the conviction that the Christian life of women, as of men, must have free course in the activities that are normal to the age in which they live, and that Paul would be the first to have it so. In fact, I think he would have cancelled the prohibition, if he had foreseen what would come of it through long centuries. Better a little disorder in Corinth, he would have said, than such a handicap on the sex of Phœbe and Priscilla. In later years I have had no trouble with these Corinthian counsels; and since I ceased to believe myself required to accept all arguments in the Bible as valid because they are there, I

have not been troubled by the inconclusive reasons for enforcing silence upon women that are found in the Pastoral Epistles. Thus by a long and slow evolution I have come to recognize the normal freedom of the Christian life. It seems a pity that I had to unlearn so much upon the way.

After this third pastorate I spent a few years as teacher of New Testament Interpretation in a Theological Seminary. Before I accepted the position I had a long talk with the president of the institution, in which I told him all about my point of view with regard to the Scriptures, and the various departures from the usual views in theology to which I had been led. I did not know but he would withdraw the invitation, as he had full opportunity to do; but he was not afraid of me, and I went to the new work, which had attracted me from the first, and which I

found full of interest and enjoyment. Not more truly than in the pastorate, but in a special sense, the Bible was now my specific field.

I do not think that my work was very well planned, or that I gave my students as comprehensive or helpful a course of instruction as they were entitled to receive. I could devise a much better method of proceeding now. Nevertheless, however imperfectly, I was aiming at the right point, and was working with enthusiasm. I was trying to train the men in ability to find out exactly what a writer meant by what he wrote. Lexical and grammatical considerations came first; then purpose, connection of thought, side-lights, and, most important of all, sympathetic entrance to the writer's point of view, and endeavor to think his thought along with him, as far as this was possible. I did not require them to study the inspiration of the Bible before they studied

the Bible. I did not inquire beforehand whether the book was inspired in some particular manner or not inspired. I simply opened it as it was and began to read, seeking to interpret, in the sense that I have just presented.

How difficult genuine interpretation is, if one wishes to be exact, I was beginning to know. The fact is that absolutely perfect understanding of what a writer meant by a written page can never be obtained. Even the more external matters cannot be managed to perfection. Perfect translation is impossible. The meaning of words and the structure of sentences can never be so determined that there shall be no ambiguity whatever, and the historical setting can never be perfectly reproduced in the reader's mind. But even farther beyond reach is the inner work of interpretation. One man cannot perfectly take another's point of view and think his thought after him:

least of all can this be done when the other speaks out of another age and training, thinking his thought in a world of personal experience which to the student does not exist. The thought of Paul, for example, precisely as he thought it, no modern mind has thought or can ever think. Part of the indispensable conditions are lacking and cannot be supplied. It is one of the delusions of theologians to think that they have done it. No one has done it. And if no one has perfectly thought the thought of Paul, of course no one has ever perfectly accepted it, or agreed with it. Very many have agreed with Paul as they understood him, but with the very actual identical Paul, with his very thought, no one has ever perfectly agreed, for no one has had the opportunity.

Was I trying then to train my students to do the impossible? In a sense yes, in another sense no. A long way toward full

success in interpretation we can go. We can understand Paul, for example, approximately, and in general we can understand him well; and we may be sure that with proper use of means, we can understand him as well as we need to. God does not require the impossible, and we may be sure that he has not made an unattainable understanding of the Bible essential to our welfare.

This fact of the possibility of an imperfect and the impossibility of a perfect interpretation carries with it an important lesson as to the nature of the Bible; and better progress would have been made in my class-room if we could all have done justice to it. It confirms the conviction that had met me but not wholly mastered me years before. It means that in the Bible God has not given us an infallible standard, to all of whose statements he requires our assent. If he had given us

such a standard, he should, and would, have insured to us the power of understanding it perfectly. There is no good answer to the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that an infallible standard of belief requires an infallible interpreter. But since for the Bible God has not given us an infallible interpreter and perfect interpretation is impossible, we may be sure that he has not given us the infallible book with which we must everywhere agree, the perfect standard that requires infallible interpreting. The Bible is a book that we can hope to understand as well as we need to understand it, through the best human endeavors with the help of God. In handling it we are free students, not required to agree to every statement that we find.

The method of interpretation into which I was trying to guide my students may be called the historical method, or there may be other names that describe it

truly. The point never to be forgotten is that the writer is to be allowed to mean exactly whatever he intended to mean by his words, so far as our studies can find it out. The student is not dictating to him, or even guiding him. Paul, if he is the author, provides the statement, and the student endeavors to find what he meant by it. We study our author to discover his meaning. Perfect success we do not expect, but the only genuine success lies before us on this road. If we dictate to our writer, we are off the track.

This is where we got into trouble. A good many of my students understood Paul already—other writers, too, perhaps, but Paul the best. They were familiar with his theology, and knew already what kind of doctrine they were going to find in the Epistle to the Romans, where especially this trouble came upon us. So sure were they in advance, that they were studying him not so much

to find out what he really did think, as to find the teaching that they were already attributing to him. Their tendency was to find in Paul what they had brought to him, and then think in all sincerity that he had given it to them. This manner of using the Bible had been ingrained in them by early training, by years of listening to doctrinal sermons, by attention to Articles of Faith, by discussion of doctrine, and by practice of their own in preaching what they had been taught. I do not mean that they were worse in this respect than other students, or preachers, or Christians. They were a fine set of men, some of them of the very best. I only mean that their theology was standing between them and a proper understanding of their Bible—in which position they can claim large company.

Here they were yielding to an insidious temptation well disguised. Like Christians generally, they believed that God

required them to agree with Paul. They supposed also, as Christians usually do, that they did agree with Paul, and that they were certain to agree with him still further as soon as they understood him better. This may be a very convenient attitude if one wishes to quote Paul, but it is a very treacherous attitude if one wishes to understand him. When a man in this frame of mind sits down to interpret Paul, it is extremely easy to find Paul agreeing with him. In fact, it is the most natural thing in the world. When it is assumed that the student, God's loyal child, is in the required attitude of submission to God's written word which he is reading, it is only too probable that the written word will be read in harmony with the views of the loyal child. And if this process is going on, it is evident that the real meaning is certainly not sought, and is by no means sure to be found.

I criticise my students for this the more

freely now, because I myself was falling under the same condemnation. I did the same myself, and the remembrance of it is one of the stinging and profitable remembrances of this period. It is true that I did not vitally believe that God required me to agree with Paul. As I have said, the power of that belief was already broken. Yet I was not free from the surviving influence of it, and probably my environment was doing more than I was aware to keep the influence alive. I was still studying Paul with the feeling, though without a real belief, that his arguments must be received as sound and his views of truth in religion as authoritative. But of course this position was unstable. By this time it had come to pass that on some subjects of the first importance, with which Paul dealt, my mind was made up, and was becoming more intelligently settled every year. These immovable views of mine, whether

orthodox or not, were no whims of my own: I saw them to be absolutely necessary in ethics, and of the very substance of truth in religion, and that was why I held them. Now, therefore, when I studied Paul with my students, it was very difficult for me to think, or to admit, that he did not hold them too, or to find in him any meaning inconsistent with them. My students, often differing from me in theology, were constantly attributing their own views to Paul. I reproved them for it, and sought to teach them a more excellent way; and yet I myself was really doing no better. I, too, was scarce willing to let him mean just whatever he did mean, and was interpreting him more or less according to myself. In this I was sinning against my own sound theory. I confess the fault. If any of my pupils of that day read this page, my confession is for them. My only defence is that it was my better part

that was doing it. The fault was not all condemnable. If I must agree with Paul, my better part cried out that he must be on ground where I could agree with him: therefore, in defence of my own moral integrity, I felt compelled to insist that on such ground he was. Since I must agree with the Bible, my soul clamored for a Bible that I could agree with without sacrifice of my best moral judgment. The demand for conformity throughout has driven many a mind to rejection of the Bible. At this time it was driving mine to make the Bible conform.

Whether the students or I or neither of us understood Paul correctly is neither here nor there for the present purpose. I am only telling how we all used the Bible, and why we used it so. More or less, we all read it as agreeing with us, because we supposed that we were required to agree with it. In this we were carrying our inherited idea of authority

to one of its natural results. They and I were burdened, they in thought and I still in feeling, with a sense of obligation to accept every statement in the New Testament as God's truth for us; and this peculiar perversion came naturally in consequence.

But for me the obligation was vanishing as an impossible one. This was its last prominent appearance. I was learning that in human language there can be no book so infallible that God can require all readers to accept all its statements. Such a book would have to be perfectly unambiguous, so that in accepting all its statements all would be accepting the same things. But no book in human language can be perfectly unambiguous. Experience in interpretation of general literature demonstrates that, and how far from being unambiguous the Bible is, the long history of its interpretation shows. In such a book, too, all statements must needs be final; for God

could not possibly require the assent of all, in successive ages, to provisional statements of some past time, the nearest true that the times were ripe for, but certain to be superseded, containing truth partly wrapped up in temporary forms. But in just such statements the Old Testament abounds, as all readers know, and so, in its measure, does the New. It is so of necessity, for no book whose statements were all final could ever be understood by men or appeal to them. And if we are told that our familiar Bible calls in God's name for our assent to everything that it says, we still must ask, The Bible in what stage of our understanding it? Our present stage of understanding is imperfect, as all past stages have been. We know what it is to understand "as a child," and "as a man," and still imperfectly, and we expect year by year to leave behind our former understandings as we attain to better ones. So

surely does the Bible change for us as we go on to know it better, that we can never be sure that we have quite attained to that sense which is binding upon our souls. A book thus unfolding as we study it we can use as a divine gift and a perpetual inspiration, but not as an infallible standard. The experience that I have been recounting settled these conclusions in my mind for permanency, as I think it ought.

During a year or two of this period, to meet a temporary necessity, I gave instruction also in Homiletics. Throughout the period too I was preaching a good deal. I preached in many places, to congregations great and small, in pulpits of various denominations. Thus both in theory and in practice I was still dealing with the Bible in the field with which my life had made me familiar. Here there was no change in my attitude. I

was urging students to be correct and faithful in their handling of the Bible, and to put it to no use inconsistent with its original intention. A little earlier I had delivered some lectures in which I insisted that every preacher ought to make of himself an exegete, that is, a man who could read his Bible intelligently, and explain it. This claim was not based upon any special view of inspiration, but upon the sacredness of the Bible and the seriousness of dealing with the truth that it brings. On this simple principle I was now helping my students to use texts in their proper meaning, and was trying for myself to do the same.

In my own preaching, I was gaining in freedom and variety in the use of the Scriptures. I had learned that preaching was more versatile work than I used to think it was: there were more legitimate ways to preach than I had once supposed,

and I was employing texts with a wider range of method. Once—though that was later—I received a letter of protest from an old Scotch minister about a sermon that he had heard me preach on Christian liberty. He told me the only line of thought by which that subject could be approached according to the gospel, and practically gave me the sermon that I ought to have preached. But I had learned that a great many different sermons could be legitimately made from one text, as the long history of preaching proves. In this period the manifold suggestiveness of the Bible was growing upon me, and thus its practical richness and vast availability. It is interesting to remember, by the way, that in preaching for half-a-dozen denominations it never occurred to me to vary or select my message according to the pulpit to which I was invited, nor did I ever have reason to sup-

pose that any one wished me to do so. I was drawing from the Bible a gospel that was as welcome in one place as in another.

After this period of teaching I returned to the pastorate. The place was the scene of my own education in college and seminary, and a chief attraction in the invitation was that it offered opportunity of preaching to a large number of students, among whom were many for the ministry. My old teachers also, of whom several remained, were among the best hearers that a man ever had. In this last of my pastorates my Bible was better in hand than ever before, and I was using it with my best energies for real benefit to a most interesting congregation. What wonder that the work was delightful? In looking over the sermon record of the time I do not find that I was attempting anything out of the common course. I

was simply bringing my message from the Bible with gladness.

It was at this time that the higher criticism began to influence my thinking about the Bible. Of course many questions of the higher criticism had long been familiar, and entirely free. With such light as I had, I had unreservedly discussed questions of authorship, date, historical setting, and literary character. But thus far these questions had practically been separate from one another, pertaining to one book at a time, or to some one group. Inquiry as to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, was absolutely free, and decidedly interesting, and quite indispensable to our studies, but it had not yet presented itself to my mind as a sample of a method that was to be applied with equal freedom to the entire Bible. Now, however, I became aware of a new situation of great interest and im-

portance. The method that I had used as a matter of course in fragmentary fashion was now organized into a system, and was used in examination of all that the Bible contained. It now presented itself as the coming method, destined to be characteristic of a period in the history of biblical science. Its advent marked a new era. I had been brought up in a period of exegesis, in which attention was directed to the contents of the sacred books, sentence by sentence and word by word; a period therefore of textual criticism also, verifying the very words as far as possible. But now was ushered in a period in which attention was to be turned less upon the contents of the books for interpretation, and more upon the books themselves, their origin, their general character, and their external history. On general principles it might seem that this class of questions would be considered first, when once the scientific study of the

Bible had begun. It would seem right to search out the quality and history of the books before sitting down to read them word by word. But the esteem in which the Bible was held determined the order of the studies, and it was quite inevitable that the first scientific work upon it should be devoted to ascertaining what the Bible says. But it was equally inevitable that after a generation of students had bent itself to this task, another generation should set itself to inquire with equal diligence what the Bible is. This was the inquiry of the higher criticism.

In the late Eighties I read the debate between President Harper and Professor Green on this later method of study. The discussion did not cover the whole ground, but it contained samples that illustrated the method and indicated the nature of the outcome. Some men of modern thinking were inclined to speak words of quietness, to the effect that the

new style of work would make but little difference. I could not agree with them. I well remember how the conviction was borne in upon me that the higher criticism was a thoroughly revolutionary thing. I plainly saw that the Bible would not come out of this crucible as it went in. From the generally accepted views there would certainly be great changes. No one could tell beforehand what they would be, but it was not to be supposed for a moment that the popular conceptions of the Bible, inherited from the Jews and from uncritical Christian ages, would all stand the test of critical investigation. Many of them would have to yield to new conceptions. The coming of great changes was as certain as the coming of the future, if this work went on.

What should I think of all this? and what should I do? There was no room for doubt. The inquiry that was undertaken by the higher criticism was per-

fectly legitimate, and I had no right to resist it or to wish it away. It was as legitimate, and as important in its place, as laboratory work in chemistry or investigation of the causes of disease. Moreover, though I should never be an expert in the practice of criticism, I was pledged to approval of the enterprise by all my history as a student of the Bible. I had sought to be a sound interpreter of the sacred writings; but sound interpretation is quite impossible without just such examination of time, place, history, and literary character as the higher criticism proposes. This I had always assumed, for long before I ever heard the name of it I had undertaken elementary work of higher criticism, as something indispensable to the understanding of a book. However imperfectly I had lived up to it, my rule had always been to let the Bible mean whatever it does mean. But if I am to let it mean whatever it does mean,

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I must consent to let it be whatever it is. I must not dictate its character, any more than its utterance: I must leave these to be determined for me by the facts, and must do my utmost to ascertain the facts. If they prove to be other than I thought, it is I, not they, that must change, and to make the needful change must be my first desire. And if by tradition or by reverence I were tempted to exempt the Bible from critical judgment as to its origins and character, my experience in interpretation should recall me to a braver and more reasonable mind. I had not found it to be an infallible book in its counsel to a reader, for it contained old forms of truth that were long ago superseded by truth in higher forms, and the Bible itself contains the record of that superseding. It was not inerrant, for I had found its writers often irreconcilable in details, and sometimes demonstrably in error. The Bible was commended to me by its spirit-

ual character as exceeding precious, but it was not marked by qualities that should set it apart from examination—if indeed any qualities could do that. Least of all did I find the Bible claiming any such exemption. It claimed neither inerrancy nor perfection of any kind. It was simply itself, and asked for no privileges.

Thus by all my studies I was pledged to this new form of study which they called the higher criticism. How it has been misunderstood! Well I remember the solemnity with which a minister said in my hearing, "The higher criticism is not higher, morally." No one ever said it was. But it is legitimate morally, and necessary to the understanding of the Bible. And so it has been my duty to accept the general conclusions of the higher criticism. I must be patient in doing so, and must allow time for a good degree of certainty to be reached, for I do not wish to accept new views prema-

turely. Yet even on this point I must not be too cautious. It is just as undesirable to retain an erroneous idea as it is to accept one. It is a popular charge against the higher criticism that its conclusions keep changing; there is no finality; if we adopt something now we may have to change again by and by. This aspect of the matter is often alleged as a sufficient reason for doing nothing at all about it. "When the higher critics have got their final conclusions," it is said, "we will begin to think of dropping our old ideas." But students do not talk in that way about chemistry, or physics, or astronomy, or any other science, or even about the geography of the North Pole. All genuine study assumes that knowledge is a growing thing, and as changes have come already, so they must come again. No one waits for the end of a movement in thought to be reached, before beginning to go along with it. All students of

science are glad to let old ideas give place to new, with the perfect understanding that final conclusions may still be far away. All sciences, indeed, are revolutionized as often as new facts can revolutionize them. In like manner, if my old notions of the Bible are untenable, I must leave them behind and join those who are seeking for true ideas to take their place. In the search I may accept conclusions and be obliged to give them up again and receive others in their place; but that is what all students of reality are doing all the time, and if I do it I shall only be exercising my duty and privilege as a seeker after truth. Nevertheless, although I still retain the prospect of changes, the fact is that the work of higher criticism has already led to many conclusions that are not likely to be reversed. If they are to be altered hereafter, they will be altered by pursuance of the line of change, not by reversion to what has

been left behind. Certain general large results, and many more special ones, may fairly be said to have been established to remain. At the present day, therefore, it is both my duty and my privilege to accept such conclusions. I shall be wilfully mistaken if I refuse. And if I accept them I am not to accept them on the sly and shamefacedly, but freely and frankly, like an honest man; and when they have been accepted I am not to lay them on the shelf, as if by mere mental assent I had fulfilled my duty to them. I must live up to my acceptance. I must take them into daily use in my own understanding and presentation of the Bible. I must manfully move with the movement of truth. I have sympathy with the man who said, "If it is heresy to think ahead of one's time, is it not heresy to think behind one's time?"

Thus the case opened to me when the claims of the higher criticism were first

presented. I have never seen it in any other light, and for many years I have not talked as if Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or the book of Isaiah had but one author, or Job or Jonah were historical. On these points and various others I am sure: naturally there are some on which I am waiting for certainty, and hold only provisional conclusions. At any given moment doubtless my opinions upon such matters of fact could be convicted of incompleteness and inconsistency, for I have learned more in some fields than in others. But I have found comfort in the statement that there is no moral obliquity in giving simultaneous shelter to propositions that may afterward prove incompatible. I must make progress as I can. But I believe in the process, and in the progress, and I am living in daily use of great benefit from these studies. Late in the Eighties I read the statement that the higher criticism had already relieved us of

more than half of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament. I thought it true, and have never doubted it. Indeed, more is true. The higher criticism removes the cause of the deepest of those moral difficulties, for it shows us that Christians need not attribute to the God of Christ all the acts and passions that Israelites attributed to the God of Israel, or approve the moral judgments that were recorded in days of inferior moral light. In the history, I have found the new light making much intelligible that was once confused, and much credible that was once hard to believe. Thus the modern method has come to me not mainly as a perplexing thing, though of course it has brought perplexity now and then, but far more as a means of light and help.

Particularly in one respect has the higher criticism deserved well of me. By the revolution that it has wrought in my

conception of the Old Testament it has largely unified and Christianized my Bible.

It was a day of mingled good and ill when Christianity adopted the Old Testament as its original sacred Scripture. Near the beginning of these reminiscences I spoke of my mother as unconsciously in bondage because of the blending of Judaism with the gospel in the Bible that guided her religious experience. We were all subject to the same divided influence, part Christian and part non-Christian, proceeding from our sacred book, and we all suffered in consequence. I was brought up to suppose that the fundamental and character-giving element in the Old Testament was the law, by which was meant the Judaic law in its completeness—not merely the instruction and requirement of God for the soul, the simpler and more spiritual *torah*, but the great complex institution whose means of grace was altar-sacrifice and whose principle

was legalism, with its law of merit in the sight of God. The entire body of the law, I was taught, was proclaimed at Sinai by the same God who was revealed in Christ, and stood through the Old Testament period as expressive of his mind and will for Israel, and in fact for all men apart from Christ. The Levitical law represented God as truly as the gospel, and represented his ancient way of saving men. The principle of legalism was of God, and bore divine honors in the Old Testament. I supposed that in the days of the old covenant men were accepted by God on the ground of legal righteousness, and that only in the gospel did the principle of grace come in—and that even then grace had to make terms with law righteousness before it could have its way. Both methods, the legal and the gracious, represented God; which meant that God was a being who could be fairly represented by either.

It is true that this belief, which was the outcome of my early training, had its difficulties. Paul seemed to think quite differently from this at times, condemning the central principle of the law as none of God's own. The Epistle to the Hebrews, with all its reverence for the ancient institution, declared it worthless for the highest spiritual purposes. Words of Jesus sounded out like thunder against the whole legalistic principle and method. The ceremonial and sacrificial system seemed to have nothing in common with his view of religion. Thus I was drawn into a very hard dilemma. If my hereditary view was right, one and the same God and Father had taken two opposite attitudes in two successive periods, first proclaiming and insisting upon a principle of acceptance with himself which he afterward repudiated and condemned. There were minor difficulties besides, like the impossibility of finding the com-

plete institution of the law existing through the Old Testament period, and the fact that the prophets uttered their clearest note when they were repudiating the principle of legalism; but the chief difficulty was the impossibility of attributing legalism and Jesus to the same God. My early reverence for the Bible led me to suppose it must be all right, but as I grew older the case grew harder. Within the Bible God seemed to be contradicting himself.

With what delight and satisfaction then did I welcome the message of the higher criticism! I was now led to see that the central thing in the religion of the Old Testament was not the law but the prophets and their teaching; and the prophets held forth essentially the same religion of spiritual inwardness and sincerity that Jesus preached—save as some of the later among them partook somewhat of the legal spirit. Not legalism but godli-

ness was the religion of the Old Testament, as of the New. The law was ancient in its rudiments, and the divine instruction came gradually, but the developed law with its cramping legalism, instead of being most ancient, came late into the field of life. Instead of being the ground upon which the prophets stood when they delivered their burning messages of righteousness, the legalistic system grew up after the greatest of the prophets had spoken their word and passed away. Instead of being the voice of God in old time, legalism came in because the genuine voice of God, uttered in the prophets, had not mastered the mind of Israel. The teaching that represented God in old time was the spiritual teaching that most nearly resembled that of Jesus Christ. In this light I saw that God had not held two contradictory attitudes in the two Testaments, or taken back his own teaching, or trampled upon

his own earlier methods. Throughout the Bible religion was one, and God was one. His method of salvation was one in all ages, true to his own ethical nature. So then there was no need that a learner from the Bible be in bondage to legalistic notions of the way to be acceptable to God, and suffer the accompanying temptations to self-righteousness or despair. No longer could the Bible seem to require a Christian still to be half a Jew of the old legalistic dispensation. For me the Bible was redeemed from this old division, and brought into clear Christian unity.

At the same time the Old Testament law itself was redeemed from its evil name by the help of the higher criticism. By revealing the strata in which that law was formed, the higher criticism has made it more intelligible, and shown us why it was so useful to Israel and so delightful to men of God in the Psalms. When the

legalistic element is mainly taken out of the earlier law and shown to have come in at the end of the period, the earlier law itself is left more spiritual, and more like the prophets and the gospel. It appears as a righteous and kindly social order according to the standards of the age, and as a religious order in which the men of the period could find uplifting and satisfaction for their minds. It told of God in his goodness, and was adapted to nourish the best spiritual life that was possible in that time. It was far more worthy of God and helpful to men than that elaborate system could have been which I had supposed to have been revealed in full by God through Moses. So while I could see that Jesus was right in his estimate of the legalism of his day, I could enter with equal fellowship into the feeling that Psalmists entertained toward the law of the Lord as it stood in their time, and could understand the

deep spiritual delight with which they regarded it.

I commend this experience of mine to the many Christians who have been led to suppose that the higher criticism can be nothing else than a weapon of unbelief. For me it has made the Bible to be far more consistently a Christian book than it had ever been before, and has placed it in my hands more ready for all Christian use. In my progress toward the restful attitude concerning the Bible which I now hold, I thankfully recognize the higher criticism as one of the most valuable of helps.

VI

THE NINETIES

In the first week of the Nineties my old teacher in Systematic Theology, who had been inspiring students through all the intervening years, very suddenly died, and after a few days I found myself seated in his chair, engaged to conduct through the remainder of the seminary year the class that he had left. My favorite work had always been biblical, and I had never looked forward to teaching theology, or desired it, or dreamed that any one would ever wish me to do it, or imagined that I could ever assent if I were asked. Nothing could have lain more completely beyond my field of contemplation. But now, within two weeks of a time when such

views were undisturbed, I was actually doing the work, and a few months later the temporary engagement was exchanged for a permanent one, and the work that was neither expected nor desired was before me as the work of the remainder of my life. No man was ever more surprised to find himself where he was, or felt himself less responsible for being there. But there I was, and my experience with the Bible in the Nineties was that of a teacher of theology.

The teacher had to be constructor also. It chanced that my predecessor's text-book, privately printed, went out of print just when he went out of life. He did not leave copies enough to supply a single class. There was no text-book at hand that I could successfully use, and there was no way but to make my own. Theology was coming into a new period; all the older text-books were framed upon a method of using the Bible that I could

not employ. To make my own book was what I desired from the first, but the conditions compelled me to begin at once. So in the summer of that first year I set myself to the laying-out of my system, and formed the outline of my theology as it has ever since remained. In the next three years I rewrote my treatise three times, enlarging it each time. In the fourth year I rewrote it again and printed it. A few years later I revised and enlarged it once more, and it was published.

In those years of constructive labor it was of course necessary that I should act upon some principle as to the relation of the Bible to a system of theology. But the question of method here did not present itself as a present question, or as a problem that had then to be solved. My life had given me my method with the Bible, and I found myself readily putting it to this new application. If I had been

waiting for a method, or had had still to decide on what principle I should use my Bible in constructing theology, I should not have dared to undertake my new work, nor should I have been qualified for it.

It was my task to give form to the theology of the Christian religion: therefore I could not do otherwise than regard the Bible as my chief source. Other sources I must use, and in all theology there is truth for which no written source can exist; but for that which is distinctive in Christianity, and for the Christian aspects of universal truth in religion, the Christian Scriptures provide material that can be obtained nowhere else. Of the Christian Scriptures therefore I must make primary use; and from their primacy in Christian theology they can never be deposed.

Formerly it was assumed that if the Bible was to be used as a primary source for theology, that course must be justified by presenting proof that the Bible was di-

vinely inspired. Conceptions of divine authority were very external, and very external were the modes of evidencing himself to men that were attributed to God: very great and exclusive also were the claims that were made for the Bible. In such conditions it is not surprising that a strong theory of inspiration was felt to be indispensable. If I had been claiming that the Bible was the sole repository of God's communications to men, and that it was inerrant in all its statements and infallible in all its contents, and that I had no right to pass judgment upon what it offered me, but must absolutely accept it all as the word of God, I should have needed to support my claims by positive proof that these extraordinary qualities had been imparted to the book, and a clear account of the manner in which it was done. A theory of inspiration is a very difficult thing to make, it is true, and none has ever been made that corresponded to

the facts; but it is no wonder that up to recent times the effort to construct such theories has been continued as something indispensable to theology. In my case, however, there was no need. I belong to a generation that has outlived the necessity of such theories. If one observes it, no new theories of inspiration have been formed lately: the theories that stand in theological books are old ones, discredited by later knowledge of the Bible, but not yet abandoned, because their superfluousness has not yet been perceived. But they are destined to be left behind. We are able now to take the Bible as it is, and listen to its testimony, without first proving by a doctrine of inspiration that it must be listened to. At present a more interior and spiritual idea of the evidence of the present God may be applied. If God is in a book he will be found: we do not have to justify our sense of his presence there by building up a theory to

show how he got there. God shines by his own light.

My own experience here was very simple. I found that the Bible set before me the historical and spiritual figure of Jesus Christ, and showed me the principle on which he taught us to live the true life of men: it showed me the Saviour, and the salvation. In this twofold vision I had the key to the Christian theology; or, to use a better simile, I had the light which it was my privilege to hold up for illumination of the field. This light which I as theologian was to use I found in my Bible just as it lay in my hands, without reference to any theory as to how the divine Spirit influenced the men who wrote it. I could read the book, and get my information. How the book was written is a matter of indifference to me: what it contains is the point. Under what special kind of divine influence it was written I can never discover, and my theories can

never be anything but guesses, as all such theories have been; but what it contains I can read and put to use. Viewed in this light, the Bible did not need any theory of inspiration to justify its admission as a main source of theology. I am sure that I was right in thinking myself entitled to take it for just what it was and learn its lessons; and I judge that recent theological thought is right in allowing theories of inspiration to lapse. The future will need no such theory, and will use the Bible more intelligently with none. Theories of inspiration have always been dictating the contents of the Bible, telling us what we must find. When theology has used the Bible for a generation or two without them, our successors will wonder how we ever thought that its testimony could be ascertained when they were in mind.

Another change in method was inevitable. In constructing a system of theology

I did not find myself proceeding upon the ancient and familiar proof-text method. The proof-text idea has appeared in various forms. Texts, or quotations from Scripture, have been largely relied upon for support of doctrinal statements, and have been regarded as sufficient support for such statements. If the Bible can be quoted for a doctrine, that doctrine has been accepted as true. It has usually been held that a theologian must work into his statement of a doctrine the testimony of all the texts in the Bible that bear upon the subject in question, and must construct a statement that will include the teaching of them all. If this cannot be quite accomplished, still it is the ideal, to be reached as nearly as possible. Sometimes, again, a doctrine has been made to take its form from some classical biblical passage, felt to be so important that it must be made determinative. But I did not find myself following the proof-text

method in any of these forms. A critic once remarked concerning my published result, that although the pages were freely marked with Scripture references—"spattered," I think he said—the work was not really an expression of the results of exegesis. He was wrong in the deeper sense, but superficially he was right. I was not simply gathering in the meaning of passages, and fortifying my positions by the citation of texts. I was not simply reporting what the Bible said upon the Christian doctrines. I was working under a different conception of the relation of the Bible to theology.

My life had brought me entirely over to the position of my early teacher in theology, now my predecessor, from whose method I had so conscientiously dissented in my youth. I had almost demanded, as I acknowledged to him long afterward, that his theology be dictated to him by the Bible. But by this time I

had learned that instead of being dictated by the Bible, a man's theology should be inspired in him by the Bible—or, more truly, inspired in him through the Bible by the Spirit that inspired the Bible. Theology should be a result of exegesis, but a second fruit, not a first. Between exegesis and theology there are intermediate processes, not only legitimate but necessary.

Toward this view of a theologian's task it is easy to see that my whole life had been leading me. A more genuine movement toward an end it would be difficult to find. In my exegetical years I had been gathering material from the Bible. In preaching I had been making it my own. In the doctrinal studies to which I had been impelled I had been thinking for myself and organizing what God had given me. In this earlier work I had made certain my later method. When I

was searching out the doctrine of the atonement, I had explored the Scriptures as thoroughly and honestly as I was able, and had also called to my aid universal ethical principles. Thus I had endeavored to interpret God's saving work in the light of his character as it was revealed by Jesus Christ. I had allowed the divine character and the great moral principles that are involved in it to condemn and expel whatever doctrine could not abide in their company, and had invited them to inspire the doctrine that I should hold. I had thus sought to clear the ground of all that must pass away in the divine presence, and to build up a positive doctrine that could bear the light of God. In all this I had simply been following the Christian revelation out to its doctrinal development, and had been using only such means as were in keeping with its character. I had been introducing processes between exegesis and doctrine, or

between the Bible and theology, but the processes were legitimate. By such work I had come into possession of a method that I could not abandon when I came to the construction of theology. When my results were reached of course they were illustrated and confirmed abundantly by reference to the Bible; but the proof-text method was a thing of the past. I believed, however, and still believe that I was using the right method of drawing doctrine from the Christian revelation, and of forming theology. Not that the method was an invention of mine. Even the stoutest reliers upon proof-texts had always used it more or less. But I was coming out into the liberty of it, and using it as a free child of God.

After all, this ought to have been the only way. The Bible is not a book of proofs for theology. Not for such a purpose was it made, and with reference to the truths that theology seeks to express,

its real utterances can properly find their way into theology only through such a process as I have described. These utterances fall naturally into three groups: and these in three very different ways require to be brought into theology as it were in their distilled essence. First we have the religious utterances of the Old Testament, various in quality, some in deep harmony with the spirit of Jesus, and some belonging to earlier and inferior stages of religious life. This group of utterances, pre-Christian, must, of course, be analyzed and classified before they are used, in order that only those of them that are in the spirit of Jesus may become contributory to our scheme of Christian thought. The character of the God of Jesus must make its discriminations and selections in the material that comes from before Jesus' time.

Next, ushering in the new age, we have the utterances of Jesus himself. These

are words of religion and of life. They were not spoken in order to provide material for the construction of a system of theology: they were spoken for the revealing of God, for the enlightening of men, for the illuminating of religion, for the establishing of eternal life. If we use them directly as timbers for the frame of a system, we put first a use of them that was intended to be second. They enter into theology with their sure and glorious testimony, but they must enter through the medium of religion and experience. It is thus that they are powerful. Above all others, these testimonies to divine reality must pass into theology through life.

And last in the New Testament we have the interpretations of the Christian gospel that were made by Jesus' followers. It has been the common belief that in these we have the end of theology, the conclusive utterances, and that it is the destiny

of all theological thought, whether interpretative or speculative, to return to identity, with the judgments of the apostles, and especially of Paul, the best known among them. Historically, indeed, these early statements were the beginning of theology, not its end; for theology has always been discussing them and using them, but has never returned to identity with them. They have constituted its warp, perhaps, but never its warp and woof. It has always expounded them, judged them, accepted them with inevitable modifications of understanding, combined them in various proportions, and wrought them into systems. Such various use of them is right. It was never possible that the beginning of theology should be its end, the first interpretation the final. That would accord neither with the nature of man nor with the nature of truth as man has to do with it. These earliest interpretations of Christ and the

gospel require to be analyzed before they bring their contribution to our doctrine. These, too, are religious rather than doctrinal in their intention; but besides this they were made in conditions that were more or less provisional and temporary. In those conditions final interpretations were impossible. Understandings of the gospel that were made, for example, in the light of still existing Judaism, and were colored by actual experience of Judaistic life, were by very necessity provisional and transitory. They were rich in truth, indeed: not only did they contain the central truth of Christ, but they contained important truth in their very peculiarities. But the element of finality in the form of doctrine they could not possibly possess. In due time doctrine must pass through them into other forms, and through these again into others still. And so when, in my study of the atonement, I used the Pauline conceptions, not

in their first form but in what I have called their distilled essence, I was doing what their character requires, and what Paul would wish me to do. When in my larger constructive enterprise I used the Scriptures generally on the same principle, I was doing what the nature of the Bible requires to be done.

How does this principle work out in practice? What result does it yield? According to the principle that I accepted and acted upon, a system of Christian theology has God for its centre, the spirit of Jesus for its organizing principle, and congenial truth from within the Bible and from without for its material. As for the Bible, I am not bound to work all its statements into my system: nay, I am bound not to work them all in, for some of them are not congenial to the spirit of Jesus which dominates Christian theology, and some express truth

in forms that cannot be of permanent validity. The glory of the Bible for my purpose as theologian is that it gives me Christ whose revealing shows me God the centre of the system, that it instructs me in that spirit of Christ which is the organizing principle, and that it provides me with abundant congenial material for the building up of doctrine. One who uses the Bible thus is using it in accordance with its character. He may fail in forming his system through insufficiency of his own, but he will not fail because his principle is wrong.

So much for the manner of using the Bible that I was constrained to follow in giving form to the theology of the Christian faith. In other writings, and in the preaching of later years, I have followed the inspiration of the same principle, never doubting that it was right. It is a more exacting method than the one that

it has supplanted, but to that a seeker for truth has no right to object.

In teaching theology I have very naturally had a variety of experiences with students respecting the Bible and the manner in which we ought to use it. My pupils are my joy and crown, and they know it; and I shall neither disparage nor offend them if I freely chronicle what I have learned from them about the harm of holding wrong notions about the Bible.

Generally speaking, and with occasional exceptions, I have found students more and more open-minded as the years of my teaching went by. But they have usually needed much reconstruction of their ideas of the Bible—a fact of which some of them have been aware. I have said to them year after year that for students of Christian theology a fundamental question is, What is the Bible, and how does it teach us truth? For want of a clear

answer to this question theology has often groped its way through open country, and for want of a tenable and convincing answer it has been weakened on every side. If there are conflicting answers to this question in the minds of disputants on theology, discussion is ambiguous and inconclusive, and therefore endless. I have often been hampered in teaching by the fact that my students and I were carrying in our minds different answers to this fundamental question. As long as that was the case, it was inevitable that we should be working more or less at cross-purposes. Students for the ministry, however, as I have known them, are usually very slow to accept any considerable alteration of their general conception of the Bible: many of them resist the change most earnestly. The fact that this is perfectly intelligible does not render it less unfortunate. Many of them come to us a generation or two behind the times in

knowledge of what the Bible is, and hold beliefs about it that stand in the way of their obtaining better knowledge. It is pathetic when a young man's belief about the word of God prevents his coming to the best belief in God.

I think theological seminaries would do well to make some special provision for this need. The traditional course begins with exegesis and kindred studies. By starting with exegesis the seminary assumes that the student knows what kind of book it is that he sits down to interpret; but usually the fact is that the student does not know. He brings inherited and inbred opinions, which he supposes to be the only opinions that can possibly be correct, but it is rarely the case that in his mind they rest upon sound knowledge. Usually they have been taught to him, and are held in deference to orthodox belief. I think it would be a good thing for the seminary, before exegetical work

is so much as mentioned, to offer a good stiff course on the question, "What is the Bible?" The course should be thoroughly organized, and should require hard work, and the teacher should be a scholar who is incapable of evasions and double meanings. Then perhaps the student might become prepared to do at the best advantage the work that lies before him. It is a frequent temptation for a theological seminary to endeavor to keep a student along in the ideas that he brought with him when he entered, alarming him as little as possible, or as gradually. But it may be the duty of a theological seminary as early as possible to shock him out of some of the ideas that he brought with him, in order that he may be ready for straightforward and intelligent work. One of my colleagues, in the exegetical department, has been wont to congratulate me that I did not have to take the students as he did, fresh from the outside world, but

only after he had had opportunity to rid them of some of the ideas with which they came. I could congratulate him in turn if, before he led them to grapple with interpreting the New Testament, they had had a good straight opportunity to learn under a good teacher what the New Testament is, and what is the Bible of which it is a part.

I have been accustomed to find students most reverent toward the Bible, and devotedly attached to it. Many I have found largely familiar with its contents. It has formed a most significant element in their religious life, and they have gladly looked forward to having it for their life-long companion. It has been a perpetual support to their faith; and yet the manner of their belief in it has often appeared to be an impediment in the way of a better faith. I have often counselled students to transfer to God himself the faith that they

were building on the Bible, but usually the counsel has not been very readily understood. The impression seemed to be that I was merely giving two names to the same thing, and that to believe the Bible as a witness to God was the same as to believe in God. The difference between believing in God as a living reality and giving credit to authoritative statements about him did not seem to be understood. Many think there is no way of attaining to vital faith in a living God, except by assenting to the statements of an infallible book about him: it is assumed, indeed, that to assent to the statements is to have the faith. I have often tried to make plain the difference between these two believings, but not always with success. The statements of the infallible Bible stood as a ready, convenient, and available foundation for religious confidence, and I have had great difficulty in convincing students that there could be a better or

securer one. It is true indeed that through the help of the Bible they had come to believe in God. But by their own acknowledgment they were holding their belief in God on the strength of their confidence in the Bible; and often they have based their belief in God so exclusively upon the Bible as to be seriously afraid to admit any change in their conception of the Bible, lest they should lose their belief in God. Many a time have I found students in this frame of mind; and they have many companions. There are many who hold their faith in God by so feeble a tenure as to fear that they may lose it if they accept the results of the higher criticism. This is one of the main causes of the popular outcry against the higher criticism: people do not see how to keep their faith in God except by holding fast to their old ideas of the Bible. For my part, I am most thankful for so precious a means of rising to faith

in God as the Bible has proved itself to be. But I think it must be God's will that the time shall come when the means gives way to the end; when confidence in the living God himself stands independent of any views that we may hold of the book in which we have read most about him. All Christians need a faith in God that no changes in knowledge of the Bible can disturb, and I am sure that God intends such a faith for us all. Therefore it is a sorrow to find a certain type of belief in the Bible standing in the way of such faith in God himself.

I have often found students very tenacious in holding that view of the Bible which I unwittingly presented to my scientific guests on a Sunday evening—namely, that it contains all that God has ever spoken to men, and nothing has been heard from him since it was completed. Of course it is understood

that he has ever since been unfolding or developing the truth that the Bible contains, and presenting it in new forms to successive generations; but I have often found it held as a primary assumption of Christianity that no new truth has been revealed by God since the closing of the Canon.

Men in my class-room have been ready to fight for this as if it were indispensable to religion. "No new truth since the Bible" has seemed to them a necessary proposition: Christianity would be dead without it. Any real reason why God should not be manifesting truth to his creatures in one age as well as in another, and truth that he had not shown to them before, has not been alleged: it was only that such action of God was ruled out by the theory that was held concerning the Bible. It was assumed that the Bible was final, and that was reason enough: no new truth can have been revealed since.

And thus by their theory about the Bible Christians were prevented from rising to belief in the living God, always the same, whose nature it is to be shining as the light, always in spiritual communication with his creatures, administering the life of his world as a self-revealing God. I am not careful, however, to observe a sharp distinction between old truth and new, for I am not sure that such a distinction can be maintained. Exactly when in the history of mankind a truth is new and when it is old, I suspect that no one can tell; nor can any one tell at what precise moment a truth is revealed from God. Revelation is not a lightning-flash: it is rather like the dawn, brightening into the full day. As for God, I am sure that he is free to utter his truth when and where he will, and I will hold no theory that would limit him. Here is one of the points at which there evidently is enlargement and uplifting in the transfer of faith from the Bible to

God. When he himself is the ground of our confidence in him, then the Bible comes to its place as our helper and brings us the service for which it was given. But if we use it instead of God as the foundation for our confidence, it even obscures God for us.

It is not surprising that the view of the Bible that I have described should manifest itself in a fixed prejudice against changes in theological thought. I do not say progress in theological thought, for that word might seem to beg an important question. Nor am I complaining because changes that I have myself proposed have found this prejudice awaiting them. The point is more general. Students have frequently stood in firm resistance to any important modification of their views. I am not without experience of that feeling in the earlier part of my own life: I well know what it is, though

I never knew it in its full strength. The philosophy is simple, and the immovableness comes naturally about. Belief in the finality of the Bible is apt to be accompanied by an equal belief in the correctness of accepted interpretations. If a man says to his pupil or parishioner, "I tell you by authority of God that you must believe this," it is necessary that he should add, "And this is what it means": for in all words there is ambiguity. When he has declared the meaning, the meaning goes into the words for the hearer, and partakes of their authority, and the requirement comes to be, "You must believe these words in this sense." But a teacher or preacher will not usually make a personal interpretation, and put into the authoritative words a meaning of his own. Rather will he take up the interpretation that has been accepted, either by Christians generally or by the group of Christians with whose testimony he is

most familiar. Thus the orthodox interpretation, approved by the many and the great, fastens its grasp upon the infallible words and makes them its own; and to the humble and reverent individual it comes to pass that this is the meaning to which the divine authority is attached. Then departure from this, and reinterpretation in new light, becomes departure from the mind and will of God. The field is not free to reinterpretation which may result in change, for sanctity guards the old, a flaming sword turning every way that keeps the gate. Thus there stands a predetermined opposition to change, assuming that the weight of God's will is against it. How often, both within my class-room and without, have I found proposals of fresh thought upon divine themes encountering this solid wall! The meaning of the law is the law: the accepted meaning of the Bible is the Bible, which stands supported by the

authority of God. And this I have met with in a day when in every other field of knowledge change of thought was welcomed as the very substance of things hoped for.

Against this view of the method of divine authority I have always maintained with my students, as I have with my own soul, that we are as free to search out the truth of God as ever an apostle was, and that we may be as truly under the leading of God in doing so as the apostles were. God has never limited freedom of inquiry by any commandment of his own, nor has he authorized his children to limit one another's freedom by their established versions of his truth. Orthodoxy is a human institution, not a divine, and God has never set it up as a barrier in the way of thought concerning divine realities. I have sought to lead my students into the sense and exercise of this normal freedom, and not without suc-

cess. And my experience in working with students has confirmed me, I scarcely need say, in my confidence in this genuine Christian liberty. Their frequent lack of it and my own continual benefit from it have kept it ever in mind as a goal of endeavor and a theme of gratitude.

I have scarcely mentioned the movement of my mind with reference to the moral difficulties of the Bible. I have said that in my childhood all was calm in this oft-troubled quarter, the disturbing questions having not yet arisen. Somewhat later detached problems, such as that of the destruction of the Canaanites and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, began to be troublesome. How laboriously these have been argued, for vindication of God! Gradually I became aware of the unchristlike character of the imprecatory Psalms. In the Sixties I heard an essay on the imprecatory Psalms

by an elderly minister, in which he began with a fair statement of the difficulty that a Christian reader finds in them. But after offering various tentative explanations of the difficulty, he declared them all needless, and staked the whole matter on inspiration. However we may feel about it, we may be sure that it is all right. His words were, "In any case, God takes all the responsibility": he has inspired these psalms with all their imprecations, and we need not suspect that there is anything wrong about them, for there cannot be, with him as their inspirer. Thought and language are his own. His solution did not help me, but rather shocked me; but after all it was only a bald statement of the doctrine of inspiration that was commonly held, in its application to these perplexing passages. I remember hearing another justification a few years later, from another minister, to the effect that we can all

understand these ancient psalms of imprecation: the best of us have felt just as the psalmist did. The amount of it was that even a good man will sometimes want to use bad words, and his passion may not be altogether an evil one. Neither did this help me much, nor did it seem a worthy explanation, if any direct inspiration of God was supposed to be involved. The dark mystery of such sentiments in a book attributed to God remained.

Some time in the early Seventies I was invited back to my first parish to deliver an address on the Morality of the Bible, in a course that one of my successors had projected. I delivered my lecture, but I do not think it was worth anything. I had thought somewhat on the subject, but had not yet taken any large grasp of it, and had no true idea of the way in which it ought to be treated. I supposed that the Bible, as the word of God, would

contain the divine teaching as to the morals of human life: therefore I expected to find God's system of morality presented rudimentally in the Old Testament, and perfectly in the New. This of course I could find, as others did, by judicious selection of materials—just as I afterward found men finding their premillennial and postmillennial theories of the advent. This I did, as well as I could, endeavoring to state and illustrate the ruling principles of the divine morality. But I became aware how much I had to omit in order to make the Bible yield this result: how much there was there that did not fall into the scheme of the Christian ethics. Hard places had to be skipped. The biblical material as a whole did not yield itself to that kind of treatment: the method was wrong, and my lecture probably did not help the situation for any one. The pastor, however, an older man, told me that he thought I had the

right idea, and did not see how much more could be done than I had included in my endeavor. Yet his tone indicated that he did not regard the effort as very satisfactory, and wished he could see a better way through the question. He was no farther along than I.

As long as I believed that I was bound to approve all that any part of the Bible said about God and his judgments as to good and evil, it was natural that I should look away from the moral difficulties, or should minimize them as much as possible. If moral contradictions were attributed to God, it was natural that I should be blind to them. The skipping was a privilege, and seemingly a duty. Here my conception of inspiration tended directly to blunt my moral sense, by preventing a straightforward ethical judgment upon matters that were laid before me. In my youth I was taught that concerning matters of record in the Bible,

especially in their bearing upon the character of God, I had no right to the free exercise of my moral judgment. I must not admit that God had done wrong or approved of evil: hence I must deny that any act attributed to him in the inspired Bible was wrong, or that anything was evil that he was recorded to have approved. In my childhood, how well I remember the shocked and grieved expression with which any sharp inquisitiveness about such acts was met! "God did it, for the Bible says so, and what God did was right: of course it was right—you must not question it": such was the repressive reverence that such inquiries encountered. In later years how often have I heard good men arguing with unconscious sophistry that deeds that bore every mark of being wrong were right because God was recorded to have done them or approved them! It was a necessity. If we were to believe in the good God and the

infallibility of the Old Testament, we had to ignore the moral contradictions, or else to argue them out of the way.

In this manner it came to pass that I did not fully know how serious were the moral difficulties of the Bible from the old point of view, until after they had ceased to trouble me. I have already said that my altered conception, formed under various influences and rendered consistent and secure by the higher criticism, has released me from all obligation to attribute to God all the traits and judgments that are attributed to him within the Bible. In much that I used to suppose that I must receive as true of God, I now read the record and effect of what people thought of God—a difference that goes to the very bottom of the matter. When I was thus set free from obligation to approve all that I found, I could see how much there was that I could not approve, as well as how high and glorious

was the morality of Christ. I now see clearly, and gratefully, how broad is the contrast between the Christian thought of God and much that stands in the Old Testament: how broad is the contrast, too, between the best in the Old Testament and much that stands beside it there. This contrast it is my duty to note, and my privilege to keep in memory. In dealing with the Bible I am as free to call black black as I am to call white white, and I am delivered from the too-familiar temptation to call black white for the glory of God. Thus difficulty with the Bible on account of these moral contrasts is entirely gone, and can never return to trouble me.

In the class-room it has not come in my way to discuss the moral difficulties of the Bible very largely, and except in a few instances I do not know how seriously students are troubled by them. But I imagine that students, like Christians generally, are receiving a good deal of benefit

from views like mine, whether they accept them or not. Such views, widely diffused, make an atmosphere of relief that all are breathing. In the presence of this helpful influence, the unresponsive many have great reason to be thankful for what the responsive few are doing for them. The old pressure of infallibility is not so heavy as it once was. Readers do not take so seriously the attribution to God in the Bible of acts that a good being could not perform. Moral judgment is claiming its rights, even though by some they can be granted only through inconsistency. I long for the time when the inconsistency shall be done away, by the vanishing of the view of the Bible that thus hampers the moral sense. If I could welcome the Christian people into my own liberty in the matter, we should all rejoice together.

Neither have I said anything of the movement of my mind with regard to the

Canon. In such a life as I have reviewed, I could not fail to encounter questions as to how the Bible came to be constituted as it is. The list of books that bore God's authority was, of course, assumed in my childhood to be identical with the list that I read at the front of my Bible and committed to memory. In later years I learned that the Canon had a history, and that the making of the familiar list was not so simple a matter as I had supposed. From the old point of view the question is extremely important. Students have frequently become aware of this, and brought the subject up by their questions: "If you found a lost epistle of Paul, would you bind it into the Bible? and if you thought a book had better not have been accepted into the Canon, would you throw it out?" To such questions I have been accustomed to reply that we are not making or unmaking Bibles now, and are not called to any such task. The

Bible is a historical fact, and we have no need to alter it. That Bible which we call single is really a collection of books. If we understand the real significance and quality of its constituents, and learn to put a just estimate upon them in practical use, that is all that we have to do. It is for us to treat the various books of the Bible as what they are, not to revise their history, or to give them a new grouping. Let the composite Bible stand as it is, and be used as what it is. We need not increase it or diminish it. If we do not think well of the book of Esther on moral grounds, still there is no reason why we should remove it from the position in which history has placed it: we have only to use it as the kind of book that we have found it to be. When people judged it differently they used it differently: we must follow our own light. In like manner we count Ecclesiastes as an element in that body of Scriptures which the pre-

Christian time produced and the Christian time adopted. Hence it is in our Bible: but we must make such use of it as our knowledge of its quality entitles it to receive from us. If we find those books inferior to the best in the Bible, we have only to use them as inferior. As to a lost epistle of Paul, I heartily wish that one might be recovered—as conceivably it may. The experience would throw a flood of light for the people upon the nature of the Bible, its inspiration, and its claims. The question of binding it in with its fellows in the Bible would then be a living question, not an academic one, and nothing could be more wholesome. People would be forced to see on what principle the Bible was made up, and to understand that for us the real sacredness of a book is due to its quality and its relation to Christian truth, not to its authorship or its external attestation. But at present, whatever we

might do with another epistle, we are handling the Bible that the past has handed down to us, and have the right and privilege of using it as it is.

Of course I know that this judgment about the Canon would not suit the old conditions. In those conditions the vital questions were, How was the Canon formed? and, What is our evidence that these books and no others are the very books of God? Many years ago I became aware that if the Bible is to be recognized as absolutely authoritative, we must have a Canon that is settled by divine authority. The God who requires our submission to certain books of his own inspiring must not leave us to find out for ourselves which books they are. If he would be reasonable or just, he must show us by his own authority. It is the only way. Our own judgment, or the judgment of the Church, or the selective power of history, will not do:

an infallible collection must be infallibly identified for those who are required to accept it. Long ago I knew this, and I have often wondered that the point was so persistently overlooked by the defenders of high inspiration. In my earlier days, I wondered on my own account why the stamp of infallibility was left off from the Canon, as I discovered that it was, and why the collecting of the books was left to the Christian judgment and the course of events, guided by the Spirit of God only as many other matters are. But when I learned what manner of book the Bible is, I ceased to wonder why its contents were not brought together under the sanction of supernatural attestation. It is not a collection that demands the drawing of its boundary lines by manifest divine authority. The simple fact is that under a variety of motives the Church, Jewish and Christian, gathered up the precious memorials of her faith,

and here they are. There was never any guarantee that the collection should be perfect, and perfect we cannot claim that it is. Perhaps some writings equally precious with these that we possess were lost, and perhaps some that were of inferior abiding value were gathered in. By this natural process we have received the greatest book of spiritual reality and power that the world has ever known, and at this date in human affairs we have not to change the Bible that we possess. We only need to understand it, and value it according to its worth, and put it to its uses.

From the old point of view I used to assume, unthinkingly, that to drop the old conception of a book in the Bible was to surrender its value. It is true that I never enjoyed or approved the talk that I used to hear, about the critics' tearing book after book out of the Bible and throwing them away, till there was noth-

ing left but the covers. That would always have been a slander, if it had not been so profound a misunderstanding. Yet I can remember when I thought that if the Pentateuch was not written by Moses it was no part of the revelation of God, that the book of Isaiah was less truly a book of heavenly value if it had more than one author, and that if the Fourth Gospel was not written by the apostle John it bore no true and valuable testimony to Jesus. If I had heard in those days the suggestion that the book of Jonah was not historical, I should have said that in that case it was worthless—so ignorant was I of the real meaning and value of that beautiful book. But all that is in the far past. It was the book of Isaiah that dealt the death-blow to my old idea. I learned that the mighty chapters of the latter part could not have been so full of the glow of God if they had not sprung up in the very time to which they

had reference; and that time was far on beyond the days of the prophet Isaiah. So two authors at least there must have been: perhaps there were more: and the dual authorship, instead of detracting from the rich divineness of the book, was necessary to account for it. I learned, too, that there is more than one way for a writing to be valuable, and to be a means of divine revelation. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, or of the Good Samaritan, we do not demand that the events that are described shall have actually occurred, before we can hear the voice of God in the story, and we need not be more exacting or unimaginative with the book of Jonah. The first chapter of Genesis rises to a sublime height of revelation, although it certainly is not a record of actual events. In any instance, it is the real book that we wish to discover and understand, and we may be sure that it is in the real book that we shall find the

divine message. I am glad to have been cured of the unbelief according to which I thought that I should lose a book out of my Bible if I lost my idea of its authorship. Unbelief it was, and misconception, too. A reader will not perceive the value of the actual book, the Bible in his hands, until he has gotten rid of the assumption that there is peril in changing from his old opinions. Such fear of danger can only darken his eyes. But whoever has disposed of that assumption, and looked at the Bible with the new confidence instead of the old fear, may behold there a glory worthy of God to which aforetime he was blind.

VII

THE NEW CENTURY

At the close of the Nineteenth Century I had been engaged for a decade in the work to which my life had led me. My method of using the Bible had been longer than a decade in practice, and through practice had only grown clearer and more consistent. I had had no wish to go back from it, and could not have gone back if I had desired. It had been attained through one of those movements of growth that cannot be revoked. Consequently the years of the new century have not recorded any great changes in my attitude toward the Bible. Nevertheless, I must say a few words about these years. The due result of my previous ex-

perience has appeared in them in a manner that I must not leave unmentioned.

In this last period I have not been working upon my Bible nearly so much as I was in the Seventies or the Eighties, but I have been working with it, by means of it, in the light of it, in a manner that was then impossible. From being mainly an object of study, the Bible has passed on to be more and more a means of study; and such it has continued to be until the present time, and will be through the remainder of my life. I am glad to report that this has come to pass, for I am sure that this accords with the will of God for his children.

The story that I have told illustrates this double use of the Bible, first as an object of study and afterward as a means of study. In the late Seventies, when without will of my own I was plunged all at once into investigation of the atone-

ment, the keynote of my later work was sounded. I have described the change by saying that I then passed on from using the Bible in the light of its statements, to using it in the light of its principles. Not that the later method was then first introduced, or the earlier then abandoned. Both enter into all sound study, and both have been with me more or less from first to last, or I should have no experience with the Bible worth recording. But the two periods were unlike, in that attention to statements was characteristic of the earlier, and attention to principles of the later. Once it seemed sufficient to inquire what the Bible said upon a given subject, and to analyze and classify the answers. Afterward it became necessary to inquire not merely what the Bible said, but what it taught, upon a given subject—to ascertain what light it gave, by means of its great revelation of God and life. What it

teaches through its large revealing may be something different from what it says in its various statements. Certainly what it teaches in this large way is different from what it says in some of its statements. In my later years I have had to look beyond the sayings to the teaching.

The significance in a man's life of this change is evident. It needs no proof that this change of method is in effect the same as that which was mentioned just before it. When I viewed the Bible as a body of statements, it was natural that I should use it chiefly as an object of study. I was seeking to know what the statements meant. When I came to view it as an expression of principles, the principles of divine religion, it thereby became to me a means of study: then I sought to know whither the principles led. The book thus became to me an instrument of advance, an opportunity for the obtaining of further light upon the matters of which

it treats. The significance of these last years is that in them I have more and more used the Bible as the divine guide and inspiration for my own study of the things of God. It seems to me that this change must correspond to God's intention for a man advancing from youth to age. In youth he must wish me to master the statements of the Bible. In later life it must be his will that I seize upon the principles of the revelation that it brings me, and use them in exploring the heights and depths of his truth.

In these years of the new century it has been my lot to be doing such work as this in connection with the Christian doctrine of God himself. Having been intrusted with the task of giving expression to that supreme doctrine, I was both entitled and required to follow the method that I have now set forth, and to explore the boundless field in the light which the Christian revelation affords when its full contents

have been brought out. The task is too great for man, but no other task does a man undertake when he endeavors to exhibit the Christian doctrine of God. Exactly this has the Bible been to me in this great research—the bearer of the light that guided mind and heart to the vision of the divine reality. In my endeavor to see God in the light of Christ, the Revealed in the light of the Revealer, the Bible has ministered to me the Christian truth that illumines all the great realities, human and divine. In using it in this manner, I conceive myself to have been seeking knowledge of God in a way that he must approve.

It is evident that in putting the Bible to such use as this a man needs to be confident, and sure of his ground. If I had been afraid that my Bible was slipping away from me and likely to be lost, I should not have been able to employ it

thus. Many do fear that it is slipping away, and are not sure that they are entitled to trust it simply. There are so many open questions about it—so much about it is unsettled and liable to change—it seems so certain that open questions will continue to embarrass our efforts after knowledge sure and clear: how can it be put to highest uses with such unquestioning confidence as my purpose requires?

With regard to open questions about the Bible, I can say that within recent years some of them have been settled for me. On various points that were doubtful I have come to a sense of certainty that I believe to be well grounded. Many perplexities have thus been done away. But by this I do not mean that the era of open questions is closed, or closing. It is equally true that within the same period some new questions have been opened for me, and that some, both old

and new, remain open until now, and seem likely to remain open, I do not know how long. I fully expect, too, that other questions may be opened in time to come. But in all this there is nothing to be wondered at. In our knowledge of the Bible, as in all other knowledge, open questions are to be expected to abide with us. No knowledge is without them, or ever will be, any more than any knowledge has ever been without them in time past. With reference to the Bible, we have reached a time when we are more aware of them than before: that is all. In this field, as in every other, we must count upon them as ever-present companions of our thought. If we cannot have confidence in our Bible in the presence of questions that we do not know how to answer, confidence we cannot have. If strong and happy use of the Bible is incompatible with waiting for light upon a multitude of points, we shall always be helpless.

For my part, there are many points about the Bible on which I have no certainty, and many on which I expect future light to alter present judgment. Many of these open questions may remain open for a long time to come, and I have no doubt that others, equally important with these, may be opened hereafter. But to say this is to tell no strange story. It is only to say that knowledge of the Bible is increasing and destined to increase. New understanding always opens new matters that are yet to be understood, and new light always brings the certainty of future changes. It is very true that if I were still using the Bible in the method in which I was reared, this condition of things might be very troublesome, and my confident freedom might be greatly impaired. My release from that method was a necessity. But in my present attitude the existence of open questions does

not distress me, and I have no fear that the questions outstanding will be settled in such manner as to destroy the value of the Bible. My confidence in it rests on a securer basis.

The ground of my confidence is this. By this time in the history of the world the quality of the Bible as the book of divine religion is so established that we may think of it with serene confidence. It is certain that the Bible gives us knowledge of Jesus, and that Jesus gives us knowledge of God, and that God as Jesus reveals him is the true light of life. Our sacred book is thus our guide to Jesus, to God, and to life divine. This fact has been established in long human experience, and can be trusted. We are not to be deprived of it: it will stand. For some minds it may be obscured, but it is a steadfast certainty, on which we are entitled to rest in peace. In this view of the Bible I hold it, and use it, and expect to

use it as long as I live, and commend it to the generation following. I beg my fellow-Christians not to distrust it or fear for it, as if open questions were to be settled to its destruction or even to its weakening. The question of its religious value is not an open question, and we must not act as if it were. It is a gift of God that will abide.

The chief danger about the Bible at present is, on the one hand, that it will be studied too much in the mere spirit of criticism, without regard to its religious value, and, on the other, that the timidity of Christian people on critical grounds will prevent them from holding that religious value in its true rank and place. In its religious preciousness and power the Bible is gloriously their own; but there is danger that they will not hold that fact in a sufficiently strong and intelligent confidence. I believe that the religious confidence in the Bible to which I have

been led is a sample of that to which the Christian people are entitled, and I wish they all might have it. That is the reason why I have tried to set it forth in these reminiscences, and am calling the children of our Father to join me in such experience as I here commemorate. I am thankful for the way in which I have been led to this free confidence, and gratefully testify that the ancient book still brings me the light and inspiration in which I work; and I invite all timid souls out into the liberty that I have found.

Since these pages began to be written, I have listened to a sermon that left me rejoicing in more ways than one—rejoicing in so strong and winning a presentation of a searching truth, and rejoicing again that I did not fall under its condemnation. The text was, "Now that I am become a man, I have put away

childish things," and the theme was the impossibility of maintaining a satisfactory adult religious life on the basis of ideas received in childhood. For illustration the preacher took the conceptions of the Bible and of God that childhood can apprehend. He showed how full these conceptions are of worth and beauty, and how genuine a religion of childhood they may support, but he showed also how inadequate they are to support the religious experience that is normal to adult humanity. The childish ideas are too light and small to bear the strain of advanced life: they need to yield their place to ideas that have been grappled with and made one's own by the powers of maturity. And yet, the preacher said, the childish ideas are exactly what thousands of Christians are endeavoring to live upon all their days. The weakness of much life in the church he attributed to this unfortunate combination of adult

needs and infantile supplies. To his hearers, or as many of them as the accusation suited, he said, in effect: "You went out from the Sunday-school in your teens, with such ideas of God and the Bible as you had then been able to receive, and you have been living your religious life upon them ever since. In the world's work you have bent your powers to large undertakings, and have grappled with the enterprises of adult humanity. But upon the Bible and the thought of God you have never made strenuous exercise of your maturer faculties: you have never done man's work in seeking a more adequate knowledge of these realities, but have tried to live along nourished by no larger or richer conceptions than you made your own when your powers were those of children. No wonder that your adult minds cannot more than half believe in the Bible and the God of your infancy: no wonder that

your religious life is narrow and poor, your minds are perplexed by the hard questions of the day, and your energies are repressed or misdirected. You need to put away childish things, and to make your own the Bible and the God of men." I approved the message with all my heart and was glad that I was able to listen to it without remorse. I might, I said to myself, have tried to live until now upon the ideas of the Bible and of God to which I had attained at the end of the Fifties of the Nineteenth Century—true ideas and not unworthy then, but too small, too unreasoned, too ill-supported, too unspiritual, for the needs of my later years; and I was glad that I could say to God and my own soul that I had spent the lifetime of a man in enlarging, deepening, and correcting the ideas that as a child I had received, and in seeking better foundations for a better faith. Thanking God for

this, I thanked the preacher for his message, and wished that his sound words might go forth to all the Christians in the world.

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